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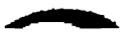
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# OLIVER GOLDSMITH

*His Friends and his Critics.*

## A LECTURE

BY THE

RIGHT HON. JAMES WHITESIDE,

Q. C., LL. D., M. P.

DUBLIN :

HODGES, SMITH & CO., 104, GRAFTON STREET,  
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**Oliver Goldsmith,  
HIS FRIENDS AND HIS CRITICS:**

**A Lecture**

**BY**

**THE RIGHT HON. JAMES WHITESIDE,**

**Q. C., LL. D., M. P.**

**DELIVERED BEFORE THE**

**DUBLIN YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION**

**IN CONNEXION WITH THE**

**UNITED CHURCH OF ENGLAND AND IRELAND,**

**IN**

**THE METROPOLITAN HALL, JANUARY THE 8TH, 1862.**



# OLIVER GOLDSMITH.

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## CHAPTER I.

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THE Education, Adventures, and Mischances, of Oliver Goldsmith, from his Childhood till he stood Friendless and Penniless, "in the Lonely, Terrible Streets of London."

MR. CHAIRMAN AND GENTLEMEN,

I have the happiness of meeting at the commencement of a new year, the friends and members of this flourishing Christian Association, assembled under encouraging auspices. Your Society has been well begun, wisely conducted, eminently successful, and will stand the test of time and of experience. The presence of His Excellency proves, that whatever tends to promote the moral and intellectual culture of the youth of our city, will receive his approval and support. I rejoice in being permitted to add my humble labours in promotion of the cause you have at heart. To cultivate, in our several conditions of life, the intellectual faculties which the Almighty has bestowed upon us, is no less a duty, than their right application, when by culture and by study they have attained the highest pitch of refinement and perfection.

We are met to-night to review the history of Oliver Gold-

smith; to examine how he waged the battle of life—how he succeeded or why he failed—to measure the size of his understanding, to observe its growth and power—to glance at his writings in prose and in poetry—to consider his character, moralizing on the lesson it affords; and then, while we do homage to his genius, while with grateful hearts we acknowledge the lasting service he has done to literature, religion and truth, we may drop a tear over the indiscretions and misfortunes which brought the poet to an untimely grave. We must trace the early career of Goldsmith in order correctly to understand his writings. To compose the biography of a celebrated person would be a delightful exercise of the mind qualified for such a task; next to the achievement of illustrious actions is their felicitous narration—the pen of Tacitus was never used with so much elegance as in sketching the virtues and glories of Agricola, moreover in the biography of an eminent individual those peculiarities, virtues, foibles may be noticed, which could not be approached in the grandeur or vastness of historical composition. The Life of Goldsmith has been written by Mr. Prior, with whom I had the pleasure of being acquainted, by Mr Forster, who was my early and intimate friend, by Mr. Washington Irving the accomplished American author, by Macaulay the historian, whose brilliant pen is now motionless for ever, and almost while I speak, an admirable sketch of the poet (ascribed to Mr. Waller our fellow citizen) has been published in the Dictionary of Universal Biography; notwithstanding these biographies and many sketches by inferior artists, the right book was not written—at the right time by the right man. That book should have been penned immediately after the Poet's death—it should have been the tribute of friendship—of learning—of kindred genius, and therefore the performance of Dr. Samuel Johnson. The Lives of the Poets attest his fitness for such a

task, his feeling heart would have warmed with his subject, his inflexible adherence to truth would have commanded assent to his statements, his knowledge of Goldsmith's character, his admiration for true genius, his high morality, deep scholarship and familiarity with the writings of Goldsmith, would have given a peculiar charm to his biography of the Poet, and would have been the imperishable tribute which one man of intellect can pay to the memory of another. An autobiography from Goldsmith's pen would have been still more acceptable. Now while thankful for what we possess, we must deplore the loss of an invaluable correspondence, and of many facts which might have been ascertained immediately after Goldsmith's death, but which are now irrecoverably lost. I may add that as Johnson would have written the best life of Goldsmith, so would Goldsmith have been the best biographer of Johnson.

Oliver Goldsmith was born at Pallas, a short distance from the unclassic village of Ballymahon, in the county of Longford, or according to Dr. Strean (who held the parish of Kilkenny West, for fifteen years) at Ardnagan, county of Roscommon, on the 11th November, 1728. He was wont in after life to say, that he was connected with no less celebrated a personage than the Protector Oliver Cromwell, from whom his Christian name was derived—by his father's side, he claimed affinity with Wolfe, the conqueror of Quebec, whose mother was a Goldsmith. If this account be accurate, few persons could boast of ancestors better known, or in their respective spheres more highly distinguished. Of his immediate ancestors not a few had been ministers of the Church of England. His father, the Rev. Charles Goldsmith, was a gentleman and a scholar—he had been creditably distinguished in our University, is said to have been acquainted with the poet Parnell, and with Thomas, grandfather of Richard Brinsley

Sheridan, not the least brilliant of our countrymen. His uncle, the Rev. Thomas Contarine, deserves to be particularly noticed; he was sprung from a noble family in Venice, and the singular history of his grandfather, who married a nun, and then fled from persecution, is worthy perusal. The grandchild of this strange marriage became a beneficed clergyman, and had been in the university the college companion of Bishop Berkeley, one of the best—wisest—greatest prelates of our Church. The enthusiastic Berkeley selected Contarine to attend him in the hazardous experiment of ascertaining the degree of pain suffered during strangulation, on which occasion he saved the life of the philosopher; Contarine therefore deserves to be held in the grateful recollection of posterity. This excellent man rebuked the false pride of Oliver, when he murmured at being a sizar, by informing the sensitive youth that he too had been a sizar, and that it had not availed to withhold from him the friendship of the great and good.

Charles Goldsmith settled at Pallas, or Pallasmore, in the county named—married happily—had a numerous family—was pious and industrious, and passing rich “with forty pounds a year.” Shortly after the birth of Oliver his father succeeded to the rectory of Kilkenny West, in which was situated Lissoy, midway between Ballymahon and Athlone, in the county of Westmeath—there the poet fixed his Auburn—there he saw in childhood the scenes, which when a man he stamped with everlasting beauty. Although we have not his autobiography, we have from Oliver what we may accept as a sketch of his father’s character, and of the lessons by him imprinted on the mind of his susceptible child, lessons which produced such remarkable effect on his conduct through life. In the *Citizen of the World*, there is given in letter twenty-seven “The History of the Man in Black,” whose benevolence, writes Oliver, seemed to be rather the effect of

appetite than reason. The Rev. Charles Goldsmith is believed to be truly described in these words, "My father, the younger son of a good family, was possessed of a small living in the Church. His education was almost his fortune, and his generosity greater than his education. Poor as he was, he had his flatterers still poorer than himself, for every dinner he gave them they returned an equivalent in praise, and this was all he wanted. His pleasure increased in proportion to the pleasure he gave—he loved all the world, and fancied all the world loved him."

The early education of the poet was intrusted to a retired quartermaster of an Irish regiment. At six years of age he quitted his first master, who afterwards figured, according to Mr. Forster as "the Broken Soldier," unless according to Mr. Prior, that character more properly belonged to Major M'Dermott of Emlagh, in the county of Roscommon. In personal appearance Oliver at this period was a short, thick, pale-faced, pock-marked boy, clumsy in manner, indolent in study, sensitive, good-natured, and kind. In boyish sports, he was active and forward—his limbs were well set, his legs were good and proved highly serviceable to him in manhood, they enabled him to walk over a good part of Europe before railways existed, and qualified him to endure privations and fatigue when he had too often an empty stomach and an empty purse. The schools to which Goldsmith was afterwards sent were good, and although he shewed a distaste for the exact sciences, he got a sound classical education ; his fellow students were in the rank of gentlemen, and had he been industrious or had he been appreciated, a fair prospect was before him of success in life. His musical propensities were fostered by the melodies of Carolan, who tuned the harp to his original songs, and whose memory lives in a biography by his pupil. The poetical tastes of Oliver were

nurtured by a local versifier named White, who appears, from the quotations given by Prior, to have suggested the idea of a poem afterwards developed in the *Deserted Village*. That the nature of young Oliver was generally misunderstood is certain. The good uncle Contarine appears to have penetrated somewhat deeper than others below the surface of his character, and to have had hopes, long maintained, of his future distinction. Oliver must have been a fair classical scholar, because he obtained a sizarship in our University, however the inferiority of his position produced a painful effect upon his sensitive nature. Moreover, he was deficient in the energy requisite to attain success against active competition—he would not read what he did not like, and without industry nothing could be gained then or now in the University of Dublin. The college life of Goldsmith was irregular and unhappy—careless, desponding, and idle, he never could extricate himself from pecuniary difficulties, nor exhibit in his studies diligence and application. When his pocket was empty, he composed ballads, for which he received a few shillings, and enjoyed the luxury of fame by listening to the singers in the streets and the applause of the crowd—then, on his way home he would bestow the price of his poetic effusions on the first beggar who would piteously demand his alms. Washington Irving relates an anecdote indicative of that prompt, but thoughtless and often whimsical benevolence, which throughout life formed one of the most eccentric yet endearing points of his character. Being engaged to breakfast with a college intimate, he failed to make his appearance, his friend repaired to his room, knocked at the door, and was bidden to enter, to his surprise he found Goldsmith in bed, immersed to his chin in feathers. A serio-comic story explained the circumstance. In the course of the preceding evening's stroll he had met a

woman who implored his charity, exclaiming that her husband was in the hospital! she was just from the country! a stranger and destitute! without food or shelter for her five helpless children! This was too much for the kind heart of Goldsmith. He was almost as poor as herself and had therefore no money to give; but he brought her to the college gate, gave her the blankets from his bed to cover her little children, and part of his clothes to sell and purchase food; and, finding himself cold during the night had cut open his bed and buried himself among the feathers. Be not alarmed kind friends—the excessive benevolence of a poet will not infect society; the unpoetic youths of our day will not allow themselves to be suffocated in feathers to relieve the destitute mother of five romping children. The college tutor of Goldsmith is described as a ruffianly person, who in his fury on one occasion, personally chastised his unfortunate pupil; the pupil grew obdurate—then was present at (though not engaged in) disgraceful riots for which he was censured, and thus, scrambling through his course, eventually in February, 1749, obtained his degree of Bachelor of Arts. We have a short letter given by Prior from Dr. Thomas Wilson, a Fellow of the university, dated 24th February, 1776, which tells the whole truth, so far as it could then be ascertained, as to the college career of Oliver Goldsmith.

“I send you,” writes Dr. Wilson, “all the intelligence I can derive from the College Registry relating to Dr. Goldsmith. I will clear up one point, which will prove a satisfaction to his surviving friends, as it will show that he was never expelled, and that the offence for which he was censured was only a juvenile indiscretion, and did not in the least affect his moral character. While he resided in the College he exhibited no specimens of that genius which in his maturer years raised his character so high. Squalid poverty and its concomitants,

idleness and despondence, probably checked every aspiring hope, and repressed the exertion of his talents; and the savage brutality that shone so conspicuous in the truly amiable gentleman (Mr. Wilder) who was to rule his studies under the notion of a tutor, was better calculated to frighten than allure. The world is obliged for Goldsmith's works to his idleness and miscarriages in College, which deprived him of all hope of rising in the church to a curacy, on which he might have comfortably starved to a good old age."

Many persons subsequently celebrated, were about that period commencing their career of fame, amongst others two great Irishmen, Flood and Burke, studied in our University.

The stately Flood, does not appear to have noticed the humble Goldsmith, yet the subsequent success in London of the starving poet, was greater in literature, than the success of Flood in politics. Grattan eloquently explained the cause of Flood's comparative failure in the English Parliament, notwithstanding his reputation in the Irish Senate, " He was an oak of the forest too old to be transplanted." Burke, though not pre-eminently distinguished in his academic career, yet was successful—studious—correct—thoughtful—laying deep the foundations in knowledge and philosophy upon which he built up a reputation wide as the world. Burke and Goldsmith, at first acquaintances, were thrown together at a later period of life, and became associates and friends.

The subsequent career of Goldsmith down to his settlement as a literary man in London, was more chequered, unaccountable, and I must add provoking, than that of any eccentric author of whom we read in modern times. Having returned to the country from the University, he dwelt amongst his friends for two years, awaiting his arrival at the age of twenty-three, when it was hoped he would take holy orders. He seems to have spent this interval in follies which may be described

as innocent, resembling those of Tony Lumpkin in the play, that is in singing, joking, rhyming, sporting, and sometimes, though reluctantly, teaching in his brother Henry's village school—that brother was a man of piety and learning, having married early and settled down upon an humble preferment he practised the virtues he taught and was by all who witnessed his useful labours, respected and beloved. It is not surprising that the character of the true minister of Christ should have made an indelible impression on the mind of young Oliver—he beheld in his father, in his uncle, in his brother, that character exemplified in its purity, in its simplicity, and almost in its apostolic perfection—so, he delighted in describing such a character, and his delineations will live for ever. That Goldsmith read tales—novels—travels—plays—that he studied such specimens of animated nature as were within his reach—that he picked up a smattering of French and a knowledge of music is certain, but these were not the studies to qualify him for the Church, and accordingly, when at the earnest solicitations of his uncle Contarine, he presented himself to the Bishop of Elphin for ordination he was rejected—some say because he appeared before the Bishop in scarlet breeches. But the fact was, he was not fitted for the Church, and always himself so asserted. We next find him in a gentleman's family as tutor—a situation he disliked, because dependent. After some months he quarrelled with his host while at cards, vowed the gentleman cheated, received his stipend of thirty pounds—mounted a horse and rode off to Cork with the notion of emigrating to America—prudently secured his passage, but the wind proving unfavourable he went pleasureing in the country, whereupon the captain sailed without him, and then having sold his horse, and spent his money, he presented himself suddenly to his widowed mother hungry and penniless. The good woman being justly incensed at his imprudence, he

tries to soothe her indignation by a narration of his adventures so whimsical and so humorous, that Washington Irving thinks it was touched up a little with the fanciful pen of the future essayist—it opens thus early his “happy knack of extracting sweets from that worldly experience which to others yields nothing but bitterness.” What next was to be done with the wayward youth? He was advised to become, according to his own expression, “a counsellor.” Accordingly the good uncle supplies Oliver with fifty-pounds—and sends him to Dublin on his way to London, there to study the law. Unhappy Oliver—why were you seduced into a gaming house; why did you in a single evening lose your money, why were you once more thrown upon your friends, wearied by your follies and extravagance? In justice to his memory I must quote the words of Prior on this sad circumstance. “The shame and mortification occasioned by this imprudence were very sincere, for however prone to fall into error, few felt more acutely or lamented more strongly when too late, its usual results. He continued some time in Dublin without having courage to communicate his loss.” The good uncle, indefatigable in his affectionate zeal for his unfortunate nephew, again appears, and after consultation with his family and friends, it was resolved that Divinity and Law having failed, nothing remained but to try Physic. Accordingly the means are supplied, and we now find Oliver in Edinburgh, commencing the study of physic. We have arrived at the autumn of 1752. In Edinburgh he spent two winters, making some useful acquaintances among the medical students, but I suspect not gaining much professional knowledge. He appears to have disliked Scotland and the Scotch, even the scenery was repulsive to him, and Macaulay in his History of England, fails not to quote Goldsmith’s description of the dismal landscape; but no country in the world has improved so rapidly

as Scotland since the time of Goldsmith; the rough and, barren Highlands then abhorred by the traveller, are now visited annually by thousands, who are ravished with delight. The medical schools are however no longer so attractive to the youth of the empire as they once were. Oliver got no degree in medicine at Edinburgh, but proposed to prosecute his studies in Paris and finish at Leyden. His good uncle again supplied him with the means, and the grateful nephew thus describes his feelings and position in a parting letter to his generous benefactor—"as I shall not have another opportunity of receiving money from your bounty till my return to Ireland—so I have drawn for the last sum which I hope I shall ever trouble you for—it is twenty pounds—and now, dear sir, let me here acknowledge the humility of the station in which you found me, let me tell you that I was despised by men and hateful to myself. Poverty, hopeless poverty, was my lot, and melancholy was beginning to make me her own—when you—but I stop to enquire how your health goes on." This is the language of a grateful, sensitive heart. We must now take his own strange narrative of the accidents, lucky and unlucky, which prevented him reaching Paris and deposited him in Leyden. From a letter dated Leyden, April, 1754, to his good uncle, we take the amusing account. "You may see by the top of the letter that I am at Leyden; but of my journey hither you must be informed. Sometime after the receipt of your last, I embarked for Bordeaux, on board a Scotch ship called the St. Andrew's. The ship made a tolerable appearance; and as another inducement, I was let to know that six agreeable passengers were to be my company. Well, we were but two days at sea, when a storm drove us into a city of England, called Newcastle-on-Tyne. We all went on shore to refresh us after the fatigues of our voyage. Seven men and I were one day on shore; and on the following day as we were all very

merry, the room door bursts open, enters a sergeant and twelve grenadiers, with their bayonets screwed ; and put us all under the king's arrest. It seems my company were Scotchmen in the French service, and had been in Scotland to enlist soldiers for the French army. I endeavoured all I could to prove my innocence ; however I remained in prison with the rest a fortnight, and with difficulty got off even then. Dear sir, keep all this a secret, or at least say it was for debt, for if it were once known at the University, I should hardly get a degree. But hear how Providence interfered in my favour : the ship was gone on to Bordeaux before I got from prison, and was wrecked at the mouth of the Garonne, and all the crew were drowned. It happened the last great storm. There was a ship at that time ready for Holland ; I embarked, and in nine days, thank my God, I arrived safe at Rotterdam ; whence I travelled by land to Leyden, whence I now write."

His graphic description of a Dutchman and Dutchwoman in the same letter cannot be omitted. "The modern Dutchman is quite a different creature from him of former times ; he in everything imitates a Frenchman, but in his easy, disengaged air, which is the result of keeping polite company. The Dutchman is vastly ceremonious, and is perhaps what Frenchmen might have been in the reign of Louis XIV.—such are the better bred. But the downright Hollander is one of the oddest figures in nature ; upon a head of lank hair, he wears a half cocked narrow hat, laced with black ribband ; no coat, but seven waistcoats and nine pair of breeches, so that his hips reach almost to his arm-pits. This well-clothed vegetable is now fit to see company, or to make love. But what a pleasing creature is the object of his appetite ! Why, she wears a large fur cap, with a deal of Flanders lace ; and for every pair of breeches he carries, she puts on two petticoats." Oliver enchanted with the face of the country, moralizes

"No misery is to be seen here—every one is usefully employed."

The career of our inconstant countryman was pretty much the same at Leyden as it had been elsewhere: he studied men and letters more than physic, and contrived to live by teaching English, by occasionally borrowing money, or by other expedients. His biographer quotes with just satisfaction the testimony in Goldsmith's favour of Dr. Ellis, an Irish gentleman then studying at Leyden and who occasionally accommodated his distressed friend with pecuniary assistance. "In all his peculiarities it was remarked there was about him an elevation of mind, a philosophic tone and manner, which, added to the language and information of a scholar, made him an object of interest to such as could estimate his character. I am constrained to add, that poor Goldsmith was seduced occasionally to the gaming table, and suffered the usual consequences—loss of money and remorse."

I believe the evidence of Dr. Ellis states the whole truth. At the end of a year he quitted Leyden to walk over Europe, with a little money in his pocket and an extra shirt; but his legs were stout, and his courage high. There is no truthful narrative of his adventures during this extraordinary enterprise. What is written about his travels is either conjecture, or derived from his Essays, or from the adventures of "The Philosophic Vagabond" in the *Vicar of Wakefield*—assumed to be descriptive of himself and of his journeys. He found the German phlegmatic, the Swiss coarse, the Italian ignorant, the French polite, and the peasant musical. The rich turned a deaf ear to his strains; the poor were pleased by the melody of his flute, and in return for his music divided with him their humble fare.

In Louvain or in Padua it is said he obtained a degree in medicine. He visited the principal cities in the north of

Italy—pushed his way to Paris—picked up a rich, miserly pupil, with whom he returned to Geneva and quarrelled, then fought his way towards England, walking from city to city, examining mankind—as he said himself, “seeing both sides of the picture;” a philosophic vagabond, pursuing novelty and living contentedly. Few writers of fiction have been able to imagine a character resembling Oliver Goldsmith; but while we censure his folly in attempting such an enterprise, we must accord him praise for having resolutely executed his purpose. Few travellers have seen human nature and human life as he did; and fewer still have turned a varied experience to better account. On the 1st February, 1756, our adventurous traveller landed at Dover. He found greater difficulties in forcing his way to London than he had met with in any other part of Europe,—the music of his flute was of no avail with the phlegmatic Saxon, he tried to join strolling players in a barn; offered his services to a village apothecary, and finally he was wandering without friend or acquaintance, without, as Mr. Forster graphically expresses it, “the knowledge or comfort of even one kind face, in the lonely, terrible streets of London.”

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## CHAPTER II.

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PERSONAL History of Goldsmith—Struggles of an Author in London—The Prose of Poets—Selections from Goldsmith's Prose—The Lawyers and the Doctors—He ascends to Wine Arbour Court—Is discovered to be a man of genius—Gives a supper to Doctor Johnson—Is introduced to the wits of the time—Is elected by “The Clb”—Notices of its leading members—Johnson, Burke, Gibbon, Reynolds, Garrick, Boswell—“Immortal Conclave”—Intellectual contests between Johnson and Burke—Sir Bulwer Lytton's brilliant criticisms in verse.

“THE LONELY TERRIBLE STREETS OF LONDON!”—An account of his feelings and of his condition at that epoch of his life may be had from a letter to his brother-in-law.

“You may easily imagine what difficulties I had to encounter, left as I was without friends, recommendation, money or impudence, and that in a country where being born an Irishman was sufficient to keep me unemployed. Many in such circumstances, would have had recourse to the Friar's cord, or the suicide's halter, but with all my follies, I had principle to resist the one, and resolution to combat the other! ”

Authors, artists, and professional men, describe in harrowing terms their early struggles in London, and their painful narrative, should warn the youth of our country not rashly to plunge into difficulties from which death alone can release them, nor presumptuously to imagine from the praises of partial friends, that they are capable of at once directing the public mind, or influencing the public opinion in the metropolis of the world.

Goldsmith never accurately described his sufferings and his degradation whilst a penniless stranger in the vastness of London—he sounded the depths of human misery. A chemist took him as an assistant, then he tried to practise as a doctor in Southwark dressed up in faded finery, then he was luckily engaged as usher in a respectable academy kept in Surrey by Dr. Milner, whose son had been a fellow student with Goldsmith in Edinburgh, and liked him. By this connexion he gained a respectable employment, abandoned physic, and became a teacher. He was assisted by other friends, and now had the honor of meeting the author of “Night Thoughts,” called by Washington Irving “the literary lion of the day,” this literary lion is now undisturbed, for one reader of “Night Thoughts” there are ten thousand of “The Deserted Village.”

Goldsmith always abhorred the drudgery of an usher’s life. At the table of Dr. Milner sat in April, 1757, Griffiths, the bookseller and publisher of the *Monthly Review*. Having heard the conversation of the modest usher, he struck a bargain with Goldsmith, that he would eat, drink, and sleep in his house; and in return for a poor stipend, furnish daily supplies of wisdom and wit to be approved by a remorseless taskmaster, and his odious wife. He remained five months in this horrid apprenticeship, and then escaped to a dismal garret and independence.

We now find Goldsmith at the mature age of thirty years irrevocably committed to the profession of an author. It is our business to inquire what work he did, and how he did it. Before we commence the inquiry however, as we have dwelt fully on the disadvantages of his position, including his blunders and his brogue, let us consider the advantages he possessed in his new and noble pursuit. He had studied in at least four universities, had visited many kingdoms not in

post-chaises, or railways, but on foot—had seen and studied character in every walk of life except the highest—had gained a large experience and a considerable stock of miscellaneous knowledge. Before we open his delightful volumes, could we from his character and adventures anticipate their subjects, or the charming language in which those subjects would be clothed? Could we suppose that in his original compositions, contra-distinguished from his task-work done to order for the trade, native humour unalloyed with malice would be shown? that his sketches of life and manners would present realities, not caricatures? that his descriptions would be brightened by fancy and have the freshness of novelty? that his wit would always charm never offend, that his essays and narratives would evince sympathy with the virtuous, the afflicted, the unfortunate, the oppressed? that enchanting fictions would by him be disregarded? that his pen and his heart would be dedicated to the service of truth? We find described throughout his writings the scenes of his childhood, what he has himself known, seen and suffered, the characters he has filled, the Player, the Author, the Doctor, the Usher, the Traveller, the Dupe, the Good-natured Man, the Tony Lumpkin of *Lissoy*, the Village Schoolmaster, the modest preacher of everlasting fame.

We must distinguish his poetry from his prose—and here we may observe that there is no opposition between poetry and prose, poetry and mathematics may be repugnant, but the best poets have written the best prose. Milton's prose, though laboured, is equal to his sublimest verse, of Dryden's prose it has been said “every word seems to drop by chance though it falls into its proper place, nothing is cold or languid, the whole is airy, animated, and vigorous, what is little is gay, what is great is splendid.” Addison, Dr. Johnson, Sir Walter Scott, Southey, Moore, Macaulay, all attest

the truth, that the imagination of the poet, however rich however brilliant, may be combined with the exact judgment required for prose composition.

There is nothing remarkable therefore in the fact that Oliver Goldsmith was a great poet and a great prose author. The office of the poet, the influence of poetry on prose composition have been well described by Goldsmith in his essay entitled "The Present State of Polite Learning." "It was the "poet who harmonized the ungrateful accents of his native "dialect, who lifted it above common conversation and shaped "its rude combinations into order. From him the orator "formed a style and though poetry first rose out of prose, in "turn it gave birth to every prosaic excellence; musical period, "concise expression, and delicacy of sentiment, were all excellencies derived from the poet. In short he not only preceded "but founded the orator, philosopher and historian." We must also notice the activity of Goldsmith's pen from the time he began to write—the variety of his compositions is not more surprising than their excellence. Biography, history, reviews, essays, animated nature, plays and poetry, were successively handled with masterly ability.

We ought to recollect that the duration of Goldsmith's literary life was but sixteen years; and, although he wrote much, we must lament that his pecuniary difficulties and the hard necessity of toiling for his daily bread, restricted him in the execution of original compositions which were few, in comparison with the quantity of literary task-work he was compelled to perform. Moreover, occupations which are distasteful to a man of genius, must have a disheartening effect upon his mind, must overshadow his fancy, and repress the lively sallies of his imagination. In order to comprehend, if that be possible, the wretchedness which Goldsmith had to endure, we must remember the condition in which literature

as a profession then stood. There were noble patrons whose vanity was to be pampered, there were worldly politicians whose favour or whose money, I mean the money of the public, might be got in exchange for the services of a pen prostituted to faction, there were grinding booksellers, but no great independent reading public.

Mr. Forster with no less acuteness than truth remarks, “if “any one had told William Pitt, that a new man of merit, “named Goldsmith, was about to try the profession of literature, he would have turned away in scorn. It had been “sufficient to throw doubt upon the career of Edmund Burke “that in this very year he opened it with the writing of a “book.” What Goldsmith felt upon this subject may be collected from the words he puts into the mouth of George Primrose—“Honest men, who write politics, prosper; had they “been bred cobblers, they would all their lives have mended “shoes, but never made them.”

We must revert for a moment to the personal history of our author. Under the pressure of absolute want, Goldsmith had to return for shelter to Dr. Milner's, and resume the occupation (to him hateful) of an usher. Then he struggled to pass as a surgeon in order to fill a small appointment in India —failed in his examination—fell back upon the occupation of a starving author—got some advances—books and a suit of clothes as tools from a griping bookseller—pawned the clothes and books to rescue the husband of his miserable landlady from the bailiffs, was threatened by the bookseller with a prosecution, and wrote in reply the words which when read make us thrill with horror. “Sir,” wrote Goldsmith, “I know of no misery but a gaol to which my own imprudence and your letter seem to point. I have seen it inevitable these three or four weeks, and by heavens! request it

as a favour—as a favour that may prevent something more fatal. I have been some years struggling with a wretched being; with all that contempt which indigence brings with it, with all those strong passions which make contempt insupportable. What then has a gaol that is formidable? I shall at least have the society of wretches, and such is to me, true society." Through these miseries he struggled slowly into eminence as an author.

Amidst the various prose publications of Goldsmith I must select one or two specimens of his style, and therefore will touch upon the "Citizen of the World," being a collection of entertaining letters, supposed to be written by a Chinese philosopher in London, to his friend in China, and which are full of humorous and pleasant descriptions. The manners, literature, laws and institutions of England, are exhibited with inimitable skill, as they might appear to an observant stranger. These letters may be read to-day with pleasure and advantage. The visit of the Chinese to Westminster Hall with his pleasant friend the Man in Black, invites to an inquiry into the laws of England and their practical administration. The Man in Black has a lawsuit, which has been pending for years, but is on the point of determination, and so he will conduct the eastern philosopher to witness his triumph. The dialogue is animated, and to the lawyers present will be profitable. "'But, prythee' continued I, as we set forward, 'what reasons have you to think an affair at last concluded which has given you so many disappointments?' 'My lawyer tells me,' returned he, 'That I have Salkeld and Ventris strong in my favour, and that there are no less than fifteen cases in point.' 'I understand,' said I, 'those are two of your judges who have already given their opinions.' 'Pardon me,' replied my friend, 'Salkeld and Ventris are

lawyers who some hundred years ago gave their opinions on cases similar to mine; these opinions which speak for me my lawyer is to cite, and those opinions which look another way are cited by the lawyer employed by my antagonist; as I observed, I have Salkeld and Ventris for me, he has Coke and Hale for him, and he that has most opinions is most likely to carry his cause.' 'But where is the necessity,' cried I, 'of prolonging a suit by citing the opinions and reports of others, since the same good sense which determined lawyers in former ages, may serve to guide your judges of this day, if arguing from authorities be exploded from every branch of learning, why should it be particularly adhered to in this?' 'I see,' cries my friend, that you are for a speedy administration of justice; but all the world will grant, that the more time that is taken up in considering any subject the better it will be understood. Besides it is the boast of an Englishman, that his property is secure, and all the world will grant that a deliberate administration of justice is the best way to secure his property. Why have we so many lawyers, but to secure our property? Why so many formalities, but to secure our property? Not less than one hundred thousand families live in opulence, elegance and ease, merely by securing our property.' 'To embarrass justice,' returned I, 'by a multiplicity of laws, or to hazard it by a confidence in our judges, are, I grant, the opposite rocks on which legislative wisdom has ever split. But, bless me, what numbers do I see here—all in black, how is it possible that half this multitude find employment?' 'Nothing so easily conceived,' returned my companion, 'they live by watching each other. For instance, the catchpole watches the man in debt, the attorney watches the catchpole, the counsellor watches the attorney, the solicitor the counsellor, and all find sufficient employment.' 'I conceive you,' interrupted I, 'They watch each other, but

it is the client that pays them all for watching. It puts me in mind of a Chinese fable which is entitled, ' Five animals at a meal.' A grasshopper filled with dew was merrily singing under a shade; a whangam, that eats grasshoppers, had marked it for its prey, and was just stretching forth to devour it; a serpent that had for a long time fed only on whangams, was coiled up to fasten on the whangam: a yellow bird was just upon the wing to dart upon the serpent, a hawk had just stooped from above to seize the yellow bird; all were intent on their prey and unmindful of their danger; so the whangam eat the grasshopper, the serpent eat the whangam, the yellow bird the serpent, and the hawk the yellow bird; when soaring from on high, a vulture gobbled up the hawk, grasshopper, whangam and all in a moment."

But if the lawyers of his times are thus ridiculed, the quack doctors and their nostrums are exposed with sarcastic ability. "There is scarcely a disorder incident to humanity, against which they are not possessed with a most infallible antidote. Be the disorder never so desperate or radical, you will find numbers in every street, who by levelling a pill at the part affected, promise certain cure without loss of time or hinderance of business. What can be more convincing than the manner in which the sick are invited to be well, the doctor first begs the most earnest attention of the public to what he is going to propose, he solemnly affirms the pill was never found to want success, he produces a list of those who have been rescued from the grave by taking it. Yet, notwithstanding all this, there are many here who, now and then, think proper to be sick; only sick, did I say—there are some who even think proper to die! Yes, by the head of Confucius! they die, though they might have purchased the health-restoring specific for half-a-crown at every corner. I am amazed, my dear Fum Hoam, that

these doctors, who know what an obstinate set of people they have to deal with, have never thought of attempting to raise the dead—when the living are found to reject their prescriptions they ought in conscience to apply to the dead, from whom they can expect no such mortifying repulses. They would find in the dead the most complying patients imaginable; and what gratitude might they not expect from the patient's son, now no longer an heir, and his wife, now no longer a widow!"

Gratitude requires me to confess my obligation to Goldsmith for a hint which I once used on a trial against an Insurance Company. My client, seeking to recover the amount of an insurance effected on the life of a lady who had died of something or of nothing in the provinces; a stupid-looking witness was produced dressed in black, who describing himself to be almost an apothecary in the country, deposed to the various mortal diseases with which the old lady was at the date of the insurance affected. It became my duty to cross-examine this ignorant disciple of Esculapius; I thought I might reckon upon his dulness, and recollecting the terms of the challenge from the Chinese philosopher to Doctor Rock, otherwise called Dumplin Dick, to a public disputation, and remembering the question with which it concluded, I collected my energies and said to the witness—"Now sir, I will ask you one question more, adding the very words of Goldsmith—"Answer me sir—I say at once, without having recourse to your physical dictionary, which of these three disorders incident to the human body is the most fatal, the syncope, parenthesis, or apoplexy?"—There was a pause—the witness then with infinite gravity answered, 'I think of these three disorders apoplexy is the worst.' The answer was received with shouts of laughter—the witness was discredited, and thanks to the wit of Goldsmith, I gained my cause. I

have said that our author in his writings turned his own adventures to a good account, of which we have an amusing example in the story of Prince Bonbennin and the white mice, the subject of one of the Chinese letters.

It appears that one Pilkington, a plausible scoundrel from Dublin, called upon the innocent Goldsmith in London, and gave vent to many regrets that the immediate want of a small sum prevented the prospect of a rich return. Upon inquiry into the circumstance he said, that a wealthy lady of the first rank (the name of the Duchess of Portland was mentioned) being well known for her attachment to curious animals, and the large prices given for the indulgence of this taste, a friend in India desirous to serve him, had sent home two white mice, then on board a ship in the river, which were to be offered to Her Grace. He had apprised her of their arrival, and she expressed impatience to see the animals, but unfortunately he neither had an appropriate cage for their reception, nor clothes fit to appear in before a lady of rank; two guineas would accomplish both objects, but where, alas! were two guineas to be procured? Goldsmith with great sincerity replied that he possessed only half a guinea, and that sum necessarily could be of no use. The applicant begged to suggest that the money might be raised from a neighbouring pawnbroker, by the deposit of his friend's watch, the inconvenience could not be great, and at most of only a few hours continuance—it would rescue a sincere friend from embarrassment, and confer an eternal obligation. The mode of appeal proved irresistible, the money was raised in the manner pointed out, but neither watch nor white mice were afterwards heard of.

This incident shows the extreme simplicity of Goldsmith, and his liability to imposition by a sudden demand adroitly pressed upon his good nature, but the use he made of the adventure proves also how clearly, after time for reflection,

he saw through the trick practised upon him, and to what an admirable purpose he could turn his losses. The instant he assumed his pen, he became a wise, judicious, discerning critic and judge of men, their artifices and their schemes. He was also very impartial, because he frequently, with admirable humour, described and ridiculed himself. These letters, as descriptive of English life, are entitled to higher praise—they frequently exhibit depth of thought, knowledge and sagacity, not always displayed by a popular author. For example, his *Essay on Penal Legislation* might have been composed by the statesman or the jurist. The *Chinese Letters* were admired upon the Continent, and ran through several editions in France within a very short space of time, for they possessed an European interest.

Goldsmith was now exhibiting the breadth—the power and acuteness of his understanding. We must advert to his contributions to the periodical press of another, but not less interesting character. If we would desire to notice the amazing inconsistencies of human nature, we should, considering what we know of our author, turn to the *Essay on "Justice and Generosity,"* which he published in "The Bee," a periodical commenced in October, 1759. I can only understand such a composition from such a man, by supposing him to have said—"I wish by an argument conclusive, to rebuke the mistaken and pernicious profuseness miscalled benevolence, of a certain credulous poet and Irishman, one Oliver Goldsmith."—"Lysippus is a man whose greatness of soul the world admires. His generosity is such, that it prevents a demand, and saves the receiver the trouble and confusion of request. All the world are unanimous in the praise of his generosity, there is only one sort of people who complain of his conduct—Lysippus does not pay his debts. In paying his debts a man barely does his duty, and it is an

action attended with no sort of glory." Then he defines—"Justice may be defined, that virtue which impels us to give to every person what is his due. In this extended sense of the word, it comprehends the practice of every virtue which reason prescribes, or society should expect." "I shall conclude this paper," writes Goldsmith, "with the advice of one of the antients to a young man whom he saw giving away all his substance to pretended distress. 'It is possible that the person you relieve may be an honest man; and I know that you who relieve him are such; you see, then, by your generosity you only rob a man who is certainly deserving, to bestow it on one who may possibly be a rogue, and while you are unjust in rewarding a certain merit, you are doubly guilty by stripping yourself.'"

I consider the paper written in "The Bee," entitled "The Augustan Age of England," a piece of criticism, as just as it is acute, the writer must have acquired an intimate acquaintance with the authors whom he so fairly, yet so skilfully dissects. The great Divines of our Church, Stillingfleet, Tillotson and Barrow, are briefly but vigorously handled; the Sketch of Bolingbroke is true to the life; and the sentence descriptive of the celebrated Lord Shaftesbury conveys a happy judgment. If the young members of this Society wish for a short, though manly disquisition on Eloquence, I exhort them to turn to the seventh paper in "The Bee," under that title, not figures nor rules pedantic and artificial he recommends, but natural feeling. "Eloquence has preceded the rules of rhetoric, as language has been formed before grammar. Nature renders men eloquent in great interests, or great passions. He that is sensibly touched sees things with a different eye from the rest of mankind. All nature to him becomes an object of comparison and metaphor, without attending to it he throws

life into all, and inspires his audience with a part of his own enthusiasm. In a word, to feel your subject thoroughly, and to speak without fear, are the only rules of eloquence, properly so called, which I can offer." I cannot for your and my own profit, forbear quoting another passage, on account of the masterly sense and deep feeling conveyed to us all. "Eloquence is not in the words but in the subject, and in great concerns the more simply anything is expressed, it is generally the more sublime, for there is, properly speaking, no sublime style, the sublimity lies only in the things; and when they are not so, the language may be turgid, affected, metaphorical, but not affecting." What can be more simply expressed than the following extract from a celebrated preacher (Massillon), and yet what was ever more sublime? Speaking of the small number of the elect, he thus breaks out before his audience:—"Let us suppose that this was the last hour of us all: that the heavens were opening over our heads: that time was passed, and eternity begun: that Jesus Christ, that Man of Sorrows, in all his glory appeared on the tribunal, and that we were assembled here to receive our final decree of life or death eternal! Let me ask, and impressed with terror like you, and not separating my lot from yours, but putting myself in the same situation in which we must all one day appear before God our Judge. Let me ask if Jesus Christ should now appear to make the terrible separation of the just from the unjust, do you think the greatest number would be saved? Do you think the number of the elect would be equal to that of the sinners? Do you think if all our works were examined with justice, would he find ten just persons in this great assembly? Monsters of ingratitude, would he find one!"

The sulky grumbler, on account of imaginary grievances, should read for his cure the Essay entitled, "The Distresses

of a Common Soldier;" the style is natural, the moral excellent. To read one of those delightful compositions would be a pleasing substitute for the vapid small talk which occasionally spoils the relish the tea table should afford. Let it be remembered that Johnson asked, "Is there a man, Sir, who can pen an essay with such ease and elegance as Goldsmith." I therefore recommend those Essays to your perusal, they will entertain and improve your minds, and when you read the author's fine criticisms, his happy conceptions, his elevated thoughts, and consider his broad and sensible views of human nature, and then ask how did it happen that such a man talked at times incautiously, dressed extravagantly, and was deficient in the outward manner of polite society?—remember, the indulgence of his harmless vanity was perhaps a relief to a wearied spirit, his careless talk was his little recreation; while his thoughts were summoned up when he sat down in his lonely garret to be his intellectual companions—that manly language flowed freely from his pen to suit such thoughts, that his survey of human nature was then clear and strong, the result of varied experience and close observation; that under all his trials, privations and sufferings, his pen was never dipped in gall, that benevolence, sympathy and generosity, softened and directed, but did not weaken his opinions or his decisions. In the coffee-house or in the club he may have trifled; in the lonely garret he built up an immortal fame.

We now follow Goldsmith from his garret in Green Arbour Court, to more decent lodgings, situate in Wine-office Court, Fleet-street, where he occupied two rooms for nearly two years. "Slow rises worth by poverty deprest." He was, however, rising in the world; better paid for his drudgery by the bookseller, better known in the literary world by his talents: but although he quitted a miserable abode, he never

forgot the poor woman with whom he had lodged, and continued to relieve her poverty till his death. Amidst all his slavish task work and humiliations he was sustained by hope—hope of success, of fame, if not of fortune: hope inspired his solitary labours, and made him forget what he was, in expectation of what he would be.

“Sweet hope, kind cheat, fair fallacy, by thee  
We are not where or what we be,  
But what and where we would be—thus art thou  
Our absent present, and our future now.”

On the 31st May, 1761, Goldsmith gave a supper in his new apartments, Wine-office Court. Amongst his guests on this important occasion were Dr. Percy, afterwards Bishop of Dromore, a literary divine, who had a great and early admiration for our poet, and Dr. Johnson. This evening was an epoch in the life of Goldsmith—nothing so elevates a man in his own esteem as to feel and know that he is appreciated for his abilities and worth, by men of superior intellect, who have fought their way to fame. From that night to the hour of his death, the friendship of Johnson for Goldsmith, continued unabated.

The introduction to Johnson, was quickly followed by intimacy with Sir Joshua Reynolds—with Burke acquaintanceship ripened into steady friendship. Soon after Goldsmith was elected one of the original members of “The Club,” afterwards named the Literary Club, and was admitted as the social companion of the brightest wits, and deepest scholars of the day. Who were those men, who thus attested the genius and the worth of Goldsmith? Foremost amongst them stands the figure of Dr. Samuel Johnson. I have been accustomed from childhood to look at the portraiture of the literary giant of the last century; rough in exterior, in bodily frame large and unwieldly—with rugged countenance his

heart was gentle; in his prejudices violent, his honesty ~~was~~ immovable; overbearing in his talk, his mind was full; ~~the~~ treasures he dropped in his wonderful conversations have they not been preserved by that marvellous biographer, and amusing tale bearer, Boswell, familiarly called 'Boozzy.'

I reverence Dr. Johnson—the weight of his Dictionary, resembles the weight of his body, but contains the treasures of his well-stored mind. He too, like Goldsmith, had felt the bitter sting of poverty—he too, had been irregular at college—he too, had been an usher—he too, arrived in London with a few pence in his pocket—he, with the poet Savage, walked the lonely, terrible streets of the Metropolis friendless—he too, suffered from illness and from want—he too had been arrested by bailiffs for debt—he too, witnessed or shared in scenes which in after life he cared not to recall—he too, nobly resisted temptation and never wrote a line save on the side of virtue, Christianity, and truth—in an age when brilliant talents and human learning were misdirected, to overthrow belief in Christianity and to overthrow empires. When Hume, Gibbon, and Voltaire, were endeavouring to unsettle the faith of nations, Samuel Johnson stood forth a champion of the faith, and made war with unsparing fury on all its concealed or avowed enemies—a literary Hercules, with his club he hurled to the earth the enemies of heaven.

The Idler, The Rambler, Rasselas, might be placed before the purest of women, not a word will be found there that could offend her eye. His sage maxims instruct—his wisdom elevates—and his respect for religion impresses his readers with corresponding reverence. At the period we have noticed, *i. e.* of his supper with Goldsmith, he was given up pretty much to strong tea and to strong talk, he drank all he could get of the strong tea, and poured out readily the talk, but

what kind of talk, full of substance, rich in matter, witty, learned, critical, historical, disputatious, exciting, overbearing and triumphant. In return for the preservation of such talk, what obligations do we not owe to the indefatigable, imperturbable, inquisitive Bozzy !

Johnson had his prejudices, he disliked Scotchmen, he liked Irishmen—we ought not forget the reason why !

Dr. Barnard having expressed his apprehension that if he visited Ireland, he might treat the people of that country more unfavourably than he had done the Scotch ! “Sir,” shouted the Doctor, “you have no reason to be afraid of me. The Irish are not in a conspiracy to cheat the world by false representations of the merits of their countrymen. The Irish are a fair people—they never speak well of one another.” He liked Tories, he hated Whigs; from the time at three years of age, he heard Sacheverell preach—he admired able men, and when he met a fool, took a pleasure in acquainting him with the fact that he was a fool. He was indolent by nature, gloomy at times, and constitutionally desponding: the cheerful prattle of Goldy would dispel the gloom, his amusing jokes or blunders would compel a smile. He never compromised his independence—he would accept no favours, borrow no money, incur no debt, would fight his way against the world, by his learning and his wit. Johnson raised the dignity of the literary profession, and established its position against the prejudices of a rich, commercial, and aristocratical nation

When the Dictionary, long expected, approached publication, Lord Chesterfield who had neglected the indefatigable scholar for years, published his opinion favorably to Johnson’s execution of the work. The motive was believed to be that he might be gratified with a flattering dedication of the Dictionary to himself. Enraged at this hollow device, and not unmindful of the treatment he had received from the polite pretender,

Johnson wrote a letter to the Earl of Chesterfield, never to be forgotten by the author, or the scholar. "Is not a patron, my lord, one who looks with unconcern on a man struggling in the water, and when he has reached ground, encumbers him with help."

It is believed Lord Chesterfield in his Letters to his Son, meant to describe Dr. Johnson under the character of a respectable Hottentot. But Johnson paid him off "This man," said he, "I thought had been a lord among wits, but I find he is only a wit among lords." How he dealt with infidel books and their editors, may be learned from a single anecdote, which shows the fashion in which he would deal with certain Essayists and Reviewers of this day. After Lord Bolingbroke's death, his shallow infidel philosophy was published by Mr. Daniel Mallet, a Scotch gentleman, as editor, Johnson, indignant alike with Mallet and Bolingbroke, thus disposed of them.

"Sir—Bolingbroke was a scoundrel and a coward—a scoundrel for charging a blunderbuss against religion and morality; a coward, because he had no resolution to fire it off himself, but left half a-crown to a beggarly Scotchman to draw the trigger after his death."

A vigorous, and upon the whole a fair sketch of Johnson, has been published by Macaulay. Although widely opposed to him in political and religious opinions, he does not hesitate to conclude his sketch by expressing his conviction, "that Johnson was both a great and good man." But the replies of Goldsmith to the questions of Boswell, shew in the very best light the nature of Johnson. "Why," asked Boswell, "did the doctor entertain Mr. Levett under his roof?" "He was poor and honest," answered Goldsmith, "which is recommendation enough to Johnson." A similar question, with reference to another individual, produced this reply—"He is become miserable, and that insures the pro-

tection of Johnson." Macaulay nicknames Johnson's house "a menagerie," from the extraordinary inhabitants—a black man-servant called Mr. Frank ; the pauper, Levett, who called himself a doctor, and took his fees in broken crusts and bits of iron ; and Miss Williams, an old maiden lady, deaf and nearly blind, but intellectual, who made tea for the doctor, and whom he treated with marked respect. Such was the man who supped with Goldsmith and became thenceforward his firm friend till death. Dr. Percy, who conveyed the philosopher to the poet's lodging, was a divine with a good heart, possessed of a taste for literature, of an affection for Goldsmith which nothing changed, published the "Reliques," became a Bishop and is remembered.

Sir Joshua Reynolds, the celebrated painter, about the same period formed an attachment for the rising author. His house and his purse, and what may have been as useful, his prudent advice, if he had followed it, were at the service of Goldsmith while he lived; the affection was reciprocal, for Goldsmith loved Sir Joshua.

They say the arts of Poetry and Painting have a wonderful affinity, which Dryden, in his Parallel of Poetry and Painting, has maintained; Sir Joshua was a scholar and displayed a happy genius; his lectures on a noble art are the effusions of a just and candid mind. He wrote well, he painted well, and he talked well, and though deaf, he listened through his trumpet well; he loved the society of the intellectually gifted and the good; and at his table the wits, scholars, and authors of the day were constantly entertained, and amongst them Goldsmith now was assigned his proper place. Reynolds earned £6,000 a-year by his pencil.

With Garrick, the wit and famous actor, Goldsmith also soon became acquainted, although I question if they were ever on terms of cordiality. Garrick was too quick, too sharp,

too parsimonious for Goldy.\* Hogarth, not in the Club, sought the company of Goldsmith, penetrated the surface, and admired his nature; Gibbon cold, profound and sceptical, likewise fully appreciated the poetical genius of our countryman, although he doubted his knowledge of history. A higher honour however now awaited Goldsmith—the friendship of Edmund Burke. Our great countryman after he quitted the University and had got clear of his ignoble secretari-ship to single-speech Hamilton, settled in London and directed

\* Garrick composed, in merriment, this amusing epitaph on Goldsmith:

“Here lies Nolly Goldsmith, for shortness called Noll,  
Who wrote like an angel, but talk'd like poor Poll.”

This led to “The Retaliation,” Goldsmith’s last poem, in which he sketched Garrick to perfection.

“Here lies David Garrick, describe me who can,  
An abridgment of all that was pleasant in man;  
As an actor confess without rival to shine;  
As a wit, if not first, in the very first line;  
Yet with talents like these, and an excellent heart,  
The man had his failings, a dupe to his art.  
Like an ill-judging beauty, his colours he spread,  
And beplaster'd with rouge his own natural red.  
On the stage he was natural, simple, affecting,  
It was only that when he was off he was acting.  
With no reason on earth to go out of his way;  
He turned and he varied full ten times a day,  
Though secure of our hearts, yet confoundedly sick;  
If they were not his own by finessing and trick;  
He cast off his friends, as a huntsman his pack,  
For he knew when he pleased he could whistle them back.  
Of praise a mere glutton, he swallow'd what came,  
And the puff of a dunce, he mistook it for fame;  
'Till his relish grown callous, almost to disease,  
Who peppered the highest was surest to please.”

his talents to literature. He conducted for a time the "Annual Register," one of the most useful publications ever attempted ; and ere his vast abilities were turned to practical politics, published "A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful," an example, Dr. Johnson said, of true criticism. Goldsmith reviewed this admirable essay in the "Monthly Review," and those who presume to sneer at the reasoning powers of the poet, would do well to read that review, to be found in Cunningham's edition of his works, by Murray. The precision of thought which it displays, the clearness of style, and the knowledge of the subject, prove how carefully Goldsmith studied a question of nicety or difficulty before he began to write upon it, and how capable he was of so doing. Burke was gratified by the discriminating notice taken of his *Essay*, and was prepared to like Goldsmith ; they met, and their friendship was cemented by mutual admiration and esteem. Alas for our fallible nature ! Why did not our sweetest poet profit more in his conduct through life, by contact with one of the wisest and greatest men Ireland has produced ? There was at the same time struggling in London, another Irishman of genius, Barry, the painter, an irregular but gifted man, whom Burke laboured to assist, and to direct. The letters on his own art, addressed to Barry and given by Prior in his *Life of Burke*, are masterpieces of criticism on the art of painting, and prove how universal was the genius of the writer. Barry did some considerable things ; but although Burke could give him the best advice, and extend towards him a helping hand, he could not teach him prudence or judicious conduct, and so Barry lived a reckless and unhappy life. Like Goldsmith he never acquired fortune ; unlike him he did not gain imperishable fame.

Burke was then preparing for his grand political career.

Literature, science, history, art, classical knowledge, public economy, habits of study, and of composition, and of deep discourse, all furnished their rich contributions to the formation of his character as a statesman. What that subsequent career was, it is for the historian of high politics to trace; none but a great statesman can do adequate justice to his merits. This illustrious statesman delighted in the society of literary men, he was one himself; nowhere was he more happy than when seated at the modest supper between Goldsmith and Johnson, where politics were the only forbidden subject. What a triumvirate!

When it is said Johnson was the best talker of his time, it should be added, except Burke; I do not believe Johnson was second to any man in conversational conflict, except to our great countryman. If Burke could have submitted to the persecutions of a Boswell, or if another Boswell could have been found in the world, we might have had ten volumes of Burke's talk of superior quality.

It is a significant fact, that Boswell ever names Burke with profound respect, and thus we are prepared for the admiration of Johnson; the only quality the great talker would not allow to our countryman was wit; and in this he is contradicted by Boswell and by Croker. The opinion of Johnson was thus expressed. "Yes, Burke is an extraordinary man —his stream of mind is perpetual." When the latter was elected a member of the House of Commons, Dr. Johnson said to Sir Joshua Reynolds, "Now we who know Mr. Burke, know that he will be one of the first men in this country." Once, when Johnson was ill, and unable to exert his faculties as much as usual without fatigue, Mr. Burke having been mentioned, he said, "that fellow calls forth all my powers; were I to see Burke now it would kill me." No higher testimony could be borne to his conversational abilities.

Goldsmith's critical judgment was, that Burke was superior to Johnson in conversation because "he so wormed himself into his subject." Only that he volunteered to deny it, Johnson would have concluded Burke to be the author of Junius, because he thought him the only man in the literary world capable of writing the celebrated Letters. On his death-bed, Dr. Johnson said affectionately to his friend, "I must be in a wretched state, indeed, when your company would not be a delight to me;" all the statesmen of the age formed the same high estimate of Burke, yet the highest office ever bestowed on him by the party he served was that of Paymaster of the Forces.

These accomplished scholars met weekly in the Club, the Turk's Head, Gerard-street, Soho, to enjoy the highest intellectual treat—vigorous, sustained, and brilliant conversation. They decided the fate of books and the fame of authors here Goldy chuckled, Gibbon doubted, Reynolds listened, while Burke and Johnson waged their intellectual strife.

My friend, Sir Bulwer Lytton, in his noble poem of St. Stephen's, introduces thus these master-spirits of the age:—

"Breathe calmer air, but whither shall we turn?  
To club or tavern as the whim prevails—  
Nay, see Sir Joshua; come with him to Thrale's,  
There mark yon man, large browed, with thoughtful frown,  
Arguing with Johnson—Well, Sir, argued down?  
No, Boswell's glorious savage butted full,  
Yet our vast boa foils his mighty bull;  
Now glides away in glittering volumes rolled,  
Now coils around in unrelenting fold.  
Which shall prevail? the boldest wight would fear  
Now to adjudge, as then to interfere.  
'Twixt Burke and Johnson Jove himself is mute,  
Lest Earth should rise to share in the dispute.  
May we untrembling in the Elysian shore,  
Hear them yet arguing better than before;

And as they glide down some ambrosial walk,  
May babbling phantoms *Boswellise* their talk."

And thus happily he describes Goldsmith :—

"What gaudy clown invites, yet shrinks, from note,  
Like Marlow blushing in Sir Fopling's coat ?  
Boswell stalks by him with contemptuous strut,  
Garrick smiles joyful to behold a butt ;  
Reynolds, half doubtful if worth while to hear,  
Fidgets his trumpet as he bends his ear ;  
But freed from Burke, and willing to unbend,  
There rolls great Johnson, and salutes a friend ;  
From teasing wit, and (worse) the blockhead's jest,  
Shields the shy victim with his burly breast.  
So huge Alcides on his club reclined,  
And tired of fighting monsters for mankind :  
Smoothes awful brows, from solemn toil beguil'd,  
And rocks in fostering arms a dreaming child ;  
Child, thou, sweet bard of Auburn, child ! what then ?  
A child inspired, and worth *a world of men*.  
Scorn if ye will that wish the eye to gain,  
Childhood too loving ever yet was vain.  
Disdain that gall-less, yet resentful sigh,  
When the world pass'd its gentlest minstrel by.  
If that was envy, envy ne'er before  
So much the look of wronged affection wore ;  
And ne'er did bee such golden honey bring  
To ruder hands, yet, writhing, leave no sting.

Thus he bids farewell to the Club :—

"Immortal conclave, learning, genius, wit,  
And all by stars that moved in concord lit—  
Who could believe ye lived and wrote, and thought  
For that same age the schools of Diderot taught ?  
That Gospel truths spoke loud from Johnson's chair,  
While the world's altars reel'd beneath Voltaire ?  
That Rousseau polish'd for the maids of Gaul  
The virtuous page design'd to vitiate all,  
While GOLDSMITH's Vicar tells his harmless tale,  
Smiles at the hearthstone, and converts the jail."

## CHAPTER III.

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THE Vicar of Wakefield introduced by the verses of Sir Bulwer Lytton—Rousseau and Voltaire in contrast with Johnson and Goldsmith—Character value and excellance of the book—Critical opinions thereon. Macaulay's rejected—Schlegel's preferred, “The gem of European works of fiction is the Vicar of Wakefield”—Historical abridgments—An amusing Dialogue between Boswell and his master on the superior merits of Goldsmith as an Historian—“The Animated Nature as entertaining as a Persian tale.”

We are, by the lines I have read, suddenly introduced to the Vicar of Wakefield, but how? In a manner more suggestive of deep thought, than any of the various biographers of Goldsmith have imagined. Sir Bulwer Lytton raises our thoughts from the beauty and pathos of the author, to a contemplation of the conflict then raging in Europe between the powers of light and darkness, and to the effect of the moral of the Vicar of Wakefield upon the awful struggle. The infidels of France falsely called philosophers, backed by English sceptics, were, by all the arts of ridicule, sophistry, and wit, striving to unsettle the belief in Christianity and the practice of moral virtue amongst men. Earthly thrones reeled when the Throne of Heaven was attacked. The poet and statesman puts in brief but pointed contrast the efforts of the French infidels to overthrow Christianity—the efforts of the highest moralist, and of our own Goldsmith, to uphold and endear it to the human heart. If Goldsmith, by his Vicar of Wakefield, has contributed to repair the mischief

which the enemies of our faith and the world's peace have wrought—if he has succeeded in implanting in the hearts of his fellow-men a belief in genial heavenly Christianity, from a perception of the fruits which such belief must yield, then is he entitled to a higher encomium than any which his biographers have bestowed upon him. This view of the value of the Vicar of Wakefield escaped their critical acumen, which was naturally directed to other circumstances. Here we have not merely a large, an European view of the subject, but a view co-extensive with the Christian world, and commensurate to the importance of Christianity upon earth.

No sermon, no political or mere literary controversial or historical work could have effected a good so transcendent; it could only have been accomplished by a tale such as the Vicar of Wakefield; by which, without apparent effort, a feeling of reverence for the belief and practice of the Christian faith is lodged in the heart of every reader; and in which the sweetness, gentleness, and moral heroism of the true Christian pastor appear in every line. It is the result which is to be prized. We cannot afford to lose our perception of that grand result, by minute criticisms on particular characters or particular events. In the Vicar of Wakefield we have a living, speaking, working missionary of the Christian faith, everywhere confronting, defeating, subduing the evil agencies of the faithless and the wicked and penetrating the mind of the peasant and the philosopher alike with a perception and love of divine truth. A book may be the production of a man of learning, or of a bright fancy, or of a poetic temperament, or of historical research; it may gain praise and circulation—such a book may be prized in the country of the author's birth, or in the age in which he liv'd and may die. It was not fancy, nor poetry, nor deep research, which inspired the Vicar of Wakefield—its

worth was not confined to the narrow limits of England—it was not written for any one age or kingdom—and it is not likely soon to die. The characteristic of a great book is, that it circulates in all countries—that it is read in all nations—that time does not impair its excellence, nor repeated perusal lessen its charm. A book, like the *Vicar of Wakefield*, is ever fresh, novel, and affecting.

So we find of this marvellous simple tale, that it is still the Christmas present, the new year's gift; that it is in every library in England Ireland and Scotland, and cheers every fireside; that after the lapse of three generations, its popularity seems to grow; that it is translated into all European languages, and is the earliest importation which the wood-cutter in the backwoods of America covets.

The Bible is applicable to all ages, nations, governments, peoples, alike, because it is divine. Although at an immeasurable distance, the *Vicar of Wakefield* seems to partake that character, and the sermon in the gaol, must have been inspired by the *Sermon on the Mount*. It would appear to be a vain or silly occupation to criticise such a book; my advice would be, to read it and not to carp at little blemishes.

But in deference to his high reputation, we must have regard to the judgment of Macaulay upon the *Vicar of Wakefield*. Censure from him is censure indeed. Before I read his opinion of this great book, let me remind you that Macaulay was the favorite of a party and the favorite of fortune; he was early adopted by leading statesmen on whose political opinions he shed the lustre of his talents: he lived with the rich, the aristocratical, the powerful, and shone conspicuous in the House of Commons by the magnificent and laboured essays he delivered; he held high office at home, still higher and more lucrative abroad; he wrote brilliantly some volumes of English history, for which he received from modern book-

sellers a munificent return. Amidst the plandits of the literary men of all parties he ascended to the House of Peers, acquired a large fortune, and on his decease was entombed in Westminster Abbey, amongst the poets, divines, and heroes of England. The union of great literary with great political talents, never met with a more splendid recompense. May I be excused for hinting, that such a man was not the best qualified to sit in judgment upon such a book as the *Vicar of Wakefield*. The experiences, the feeling, the pathos, the simplicity, the sublimity of Goldsmith, were not those, nor like those, of Macaulay; and I do not believe Macaulay could ever appreciate fully the genius or character of Goldsmith. Now hear the judgment of the English critic on an incomparable work—

“ While the fourth edition of the ‘Traveller’ was on the counters of the booksellers, the ‘Vicar of Wakefield’ appeared, and rapidly obtained a popularity which has lasted down to our own time, and which is likely to last as long as our language. The fable is indeed one of the worst that ever was constructed. It wants not merely that probability which ought to be found in a tale of common English life, but that consistency, which ought to be found even in the wildest fiction about witches, giants and fairies. But the earliest chapters have all the sweetness of pastoral poetry, together with all the vivacity of comedy. Moses and his spectacles; the vicar and his monogamy; the sharper and his cosmogony; the squire proving from Aristotle that relatives are related; Olivia preparing herself for the arduous task of converting a rakish lover by studying the controversy between Robinson Crusoe and Friday, and Mr. Burchell with his ‘Fudge’ have caused as much harmless mirth as has ever been caused by matter packed into so small a number of pages. The latter part of the tale is unworthy of the beginning: as we approach the catastrophe, the absurdities lie thicker and thicker, and the gleams of pleasantry become rarer and rarer.”

Suppose this best effort of the unfortunate Irishman of genius had just been published, and this criticism had just been pronounced, what would have been the general impression left upon the reader's mind by such a review? That the book was the production of an incoherent extravagant writer, who possessed some ability in describing scenes of pastoral life and in drawing character; whose absurdities grew thicker and thicker as he approached the conclusion; and whose dulness reached the climax at the close. Is that a just representation of the *Vicar of Wakefield*? And we may well enquire, what would have been the criticism of Macaulay, if he had written his critique before seventy years of unbounded popularity had stamped the approval of the European public on the book. But is the criticism true, is the "fable" one of the worst that ever was constructed? So far as respects the characters, of the family of the Wakefields—there is nothing to warrant objection; it is the conformity of these characters to nature, which makes their portraiture charming. There is an adherence to what is probable in every trait drawn, and we sometimes imagine we have met the persons described in real life; nor is it improbable that an innocent family should be reduced to poverty by the schemes of others, or that the arts of the seducer should prevail. The other characters—those of the dupe—the swindler—the rake—the philosophic vagabond, are equally natural. Goldsmith, in fact, was describing characters he had seen, and by whom he had suffered.

What was the design of the book? To give to the world not merely the amusing adventures of an innocent family imposed upon through their credulity, but a grand moral lesson of Christian piety tried by affliction, yet through faith rising superior to the ills of fortune; ever resigned but always active in works of charity and love; deriving from every calamity cause for thankfulness, and motive to exertion; in fact the

object of the book *is to educate the heart*—and who is the hero of “the fable,” let Goldsmith answer: “The hero of this piece unites in himself the three greatest characters upon earth, he is a priest, an husbandman, the father of a family. He is drawn as ready to teach, and ready to obey, as simple in affluence and majestic in adversity. In this age of affluence and refinement, whom shall such a character please, such as are fond of high life will turn with disdain from the simplicity of his country fire-side, such as mistake ribaldry for humour will find no wit in his harmless conversation, and such as have been taught to deride religion will laugh at one whose chief stores of comfort are drawn from futurity.”

But if the Vicar of Wakefield was in design so objectionable, if it was wanting in the consistency which ought to be found in the wildest fiction about witches, giants and fairies—if its absurdities thickened as he approached the catastrophe—how wonderful the genius of the writer must be to produce, notwithstanding blunders so enormous, a result so grand. Of the moral of the tale Macaulay says nothing. Is it not surprising the objections taken by Macaulay should have escaped the notice of many great critics and greater author?

Sir Walter Scott, the master of all the avenues to the human heart, has said, “We read the ‘Vicar of Wakefield’ in youth and age, we return to it again and again, and bless the memory of an author who contrives so well to reconcile us to human nature.” Goethe, the greatest of modern Germans, declared in his eighty-first year, that it had been his delight at twenty; that it had formed part of his education, and influenced his taste and feelings throughout life: that he had recently read it over again with renewed delight. And Schlegel, the celebrated German critic and scholar recorded his opinion, that “The gem of European works of fiction is the ‘Vicar of Wakefield.’” Rogers feelingly observed

to Mr. Forster, “that of all the books which through the fitful changes of three generations, he had seen rise and fall, the charms of the ‘Vicar of Wakefield’ had alone continued as at first; and that could he revisit the world, after an interval of many more generations, he should as surely look to find it undiminished.” In the “*Revue des Deux Mondes*,” published in Paris in 1857, is a review of the life and works of Oliver Goldsmith, in which the French criticism to the same effect is given. Better still than the judgment of these famous men, is the testimony of the people of all countries, confessing their delight as they enjoy their favourite volume; and acknowledging with one consent that the discourses of the ‘Vicar of Wakefield’ have reached, and warmed, and consoled their hearts. The fable may be the worst ever constructed—the absurdities may lie thick over his pages—his gleams of pleasantry may be rare, and yet the blundering author has produced a matchless and imperishable work.

The account given by Mr. Boswell of the circumstances connected with the sale of the “*Vicar of Wakefield*,” is accurate, as coming directly from the lips of Dr. Johnson. What a picture of a struggling author’s life, and of the state of literature at the time Dr. Johnson speaks!

“ I received one morning a message from poor Goldsmith, “ that he was in great distress, and as it was not in his power “ to come to me, begging that I would come to him as soon as “ possible. I sent him a guinea, and promised to come to him “ directly. I accordingly went as soon as I was drest, and found “ that his landlady had arrested him for his rent, at which he “ was in a violent passion. I perceived that he had already “ changed my guinea, and had got a bottle of Madeira and a “ glass before him. I put the cork into the bottle, and desired “ he would be calm, and began to talk to him of the means by

“ which he might be extricated. He then told that he had a “ novel ready for the press, which he produced to me. I looked “ into it, and saw its merit; told the landlady I should soon “ return, and having gone to a bookseller, sold it for sixty “ pounds. I brought Goldsmith the money, and discharged his “ rent—not without rating his landlady in a high tone for hav- “ ing used him so ill.” It is evident Goldsmith had considered long and deeply his subject, and had elaborated the work with much care; he must have accomplished this labour of love in intervals snatched from more irksome occupation; and what a miserable remuneration he received. The bookseller reaped a rich harvest, for the work ran through six editions before the death of Goldsmith; yet, when he subsequently to these gains drew a bill for thirteen guineas upon that same bookseller, the bill was dishonoured. We have lingered too long on this portion of our author’s career, but ere I take my leave of Dr. Primrose, I must return to him my best thanks for his enlightened logical and philosophical argument against unnecessary capital punishments. At the time Goldsmith published this masterly condemnation of indiscriminate penal laws and cruel executions, men and women were hanged almost daily for petty thefts, and our criminal code was stained with blood. Goldsmith argued as ably as did Romilly thirty years later. I have no doubt Dr. Primrose counselled many a statesman and jurist who afterwards used his arguments, but did not acknowledge them; we have happily lived to see the theories of our author adopted by an enlightened legislature.

Amongst the most remunerative of Goldsmith’s prose publications were his abridgments of English, Roman, and Grecian history, and his *Animated Nature*. All these works were undertaken for mere pay. Even a poet must live, and the balance out of sixty guineas, after paying the termagant

landlady, the milk bill, and the tailor for a purple velvet coat and silk breeches, must have been small, and in Goldsmith's hands must have vanished quickly. Lord Macaulay affords unqualified praise to the historical compositions of Goldsmith; he thinks our blundering countryman was "a great, perhaps unequalled, master of the arts of selection and condensation." In his preface to his History of England our author aptly says—"The business of abridging the works of others has hitherto fallen to the lot of very dull men; and the art of blotting, which an ancient critic calls the most difficult of all others, has been usually practised by those who found themselves unable to write. Hence, our abridgments are generally more tedious than the works from whence they pretend to relieve us; and they have effectually embarrassed that road which they profess to shorten." His idea of an abridged history was therefore excellent. I would mention that his narrative of the Reign of Henry II, including an account of Ireland before the Invasion, and of that event—contained in about forty pages—affords a good specimen of his admirable taste in selection, and clearness in narration. Throughout the book his sketches of character are drawn with great elegance and brevity—for example, those of William III., of the brilliant but perfidious Bolingbroke, and of Queen Elizabeth.

There is an amusing anecdote connected with these abridgments, that should be mentioned. Finding his own name not so money making as he thought it should be, he published the foundation of his history of England in a small compass, entitling the book, "Letters on the History of England, by a Nobleman to his Son." The title took well; the matter was superior, and thought fit for aristocratical authorship. It was ascribed to several noble lords, who blushed, and did not disclaim; they got the credit; and Goldy chuckled and

filled his purse which he speedily emptied. Upon opening Goldsmith's History of Rome, and turning to his narrative of the conspiracy of Cataline and of subsequent events, I found it impossible to close the volume until I had assisted the pious freedman of Pompey, in collecting the ashes of his headless trunk, and in setting up the subscription—"He whose merits deserved a temple, can now scarce find a tomb." Every historical abridgment by Goldsmith is a clear, concise, and judicious performance. The colloquy of Dr. Johnson with Boswell, on the merits of our author as an historian, may fitly conclude this branch of my subject.

"*Boswell*.—An historian! My dear sir, you surely will not rank his compilation of the Roman history with the works of other historians of this age?

*Johnson*.—Why, who are before him?

*Boswell*.—Hume, Robertson, Lord Lyttleton.

*Johnson*.—(His antipathy to the Scotch beginning to rise), I have not read Hume; but, doubtless, Goldsmith's history is better than the *verbiage* of Robertson, or the foppery of Dalrymple.

*Boswell*.—Will you not admit the superiority of Robertson, in whose history we find such penetration—such painting?

*Johnson*.—Sir, you must consider how that penetration and that painting are employed. It is not history—it is imagination. He who describes what he never saw, draws from fancy. Robertson paints minds as Sir Joshua paints faces in a history-piece; he imagines an heroic countenance. You must look upon Robertson's work as a romance, and try it by that standard: history it is not. Besides, sir, it is the great excellence of a writer to put into his book as much as his book will hold. Goldsmith has done this in his history. Now, Robertson might have put twice as much in his book. Robertson is like a man who has packed gold in wool; the wool

takes up more room than the gold. No, sir, I always thought Robertson would be crushed by his own weight—would be buried under his own ornaments. Goldsmith tells you shortly all you want to know; Robertson detains you a great deal too long. No man will read Robertson's cumbrous detail a second time; but Goldsmith's plain narrative will please again and again. I would say to Robertson what an old tutor of a college said to one of his pupils, "Read over your compositions, and wherever you meet with a passage which you think is particularly fine, strike it out." Goldsmith's abridgment is better than that of Lucius Florus or Eutropius; and I will venture to say, that if you compare him with Vertot, in the same places of the Roman history, you will find that he excels Vertot. Sir, he has the art of compiling, and of saying every thing he has to say in a pleasing manner. He is now writing a natural history, and will make it as entertaining as a Persian tale."

And is not the judgment of the ponderous and learned critic correct? Ill-natured people said when Goldsmith began his "Animated Nature," he hardly knew the difference between a horse and a cow, or between a turkey and a goose, except on the dinner-table; and that his notions of birds were formed upon the behaviour of the city rooks, which he had long watched in the gardens from his windows in the temple.

If time permitted, I could establish the truth of Johnson's opinion. Entertaining all admit the "Animated Nature" to be, but I would refer to the concluding chapter on the history of the earth, as a specimen of Goldsmith's powers for solemn and philosophical disquisition.

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## CHAPTER IV.

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GOLDSMITH as a Poet—History, uses, and origin of Poetry—“The Traveller” and minor Poems—The generosity, independence and political integrity of our Poet established—His Plays—His fortune improved—Expenses increased—“The Deserted Village”—Criticisms thereon—Respective claims of Macaulay and of Goldsmith to immortality—Calamities of Authors—The moral—Conclusion.

WE have now to consider the character of Goldsmith as a poet. Poetry has been defined to be “an imitative art”—but that is an imperfect definition; nor would it be correct to describe it as the art of expressing our thoughts by fiction. It may be better defined or described as an art which has the creation of intellectual pleasure for its object—which attains that end by language adapted to an excited state of feeling, and by the beautifying power of the imagination. Poetry is coeval with the earliest ages of man’s existence; it was a great means of his instruction, because it appealed to the affections; and if poetry was useful for so good a purpose centuries back, it may be more useful now, when the finer feelings of our nature are blunted or repressed by avarice or ambition.

In general, poetry has served morality; for I believe it to be a profound truth, that no poem essentially immoral has ever maintained a lasting popularity. Imagination is the essential quality of the poet; but he displays that faculty as much in the skilful use of materials at his hand, as by new and splendid conceptions. Imagination presents to the poet’s

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eye common things in a new and poetic light. Judgment he must have, and studious habits; but without imagination and sensibility, no man could write poetry.

Homer, though imaginative, was sagacious,—Shakspeare laid all nature under contribution, yet who was ever more practical. It is obvious that to produce effect, Poetry must touch the heart, simplicity therefore is a characteristic of all true Poetry; and consequently we find the greatest poets have been the simplest—have been read alike by children and by men, in all ages and in all nations. It may be grand, but the effective poetry must be simple; our sympathies are to be affected and therefore, poetry must be condensed passion. In his essay on the 'Study of Literature,' Gibbon points out briefly the sources of poetry, "man, nature, art." The images presented to the minds of the poet by the grandeur, the littleness, the passions, the virtues, the perverseness or the madness of man, are boundless. Nature, according to Campbell, "is the poet's goddess; but by nature, no one rightly understands her mere inanimate face, however charming it may be. Nature, in the wide and proper sense of the word, means life in all its circumstances—nature moral as well as external." According to this ingenious critique, nature includes art, form, works of the chisel or of the pencil; what we behold—what really has existence. The great events of the world light up the poetic fire which may have smouldered in the human breast. Such events awaken men to a new life, quicken their faculties, sharpen their observations, induce them to read, to think—impel to new discoveries or glorious enterprises. Of such events, one of the greatest was the Reformation, for the reasons specified, and more especially because it gave us a free Bible to be read by all in their mother tongue. How could we, apart from its inspiration, appreciate the truest, grandest, most ancient Poetry in the

world, if we had not the Old Testament translated for our delight as well as consolation. The historical critics, who trace the history of poetry from our day through the middle ages—from Dante to Virgil and Lucretius, thence to Homer—make their final stand on the Psalms of David and the Hebrew Scripture. “The poetry of the Hebrews is the oldest in the world. It stands apart from all the rest in solitary grandeur, like a pillar of fire, in the poetical wilderness.” What a profusion of imagery and illustration from all the works of nature—that is, of God—have we not here before us, we may elevate our minds by reading the 8th, 19th, 104th Psalms, and yet simplicity reigns throughout the descriptions given of the mighty landscape of nature. We are taught in celestial strains the power, greatness, and goodness of God.

We have in Campbell’s “Essay” and in “Johnson’s Lives of the Poets,” so far as he extends, masterly criticisms on the poets who have instructed and charmed our people through successive ages. I can only pause to notice a curious criticism of Wordsworth’s, (as introductory of Goldsmith’s poetical works), “that (with very slight exceptions) the poetry of the period, between the publication of ‘Paradise Lost,’ and ‘The Seasons,’ does not contain a single new image of external nature, and scarcely presents a familiar one, from which it can be inferred that the eye of the poet has been steadily fixed upon his object, much less that his feelings had urged him to work upon it in the spirit of genuine imagination.”

We can the more keenly analyze the poem of “The Traveller,” after what has been observed. What was the design of Goldsmith? To give his own experiences in harmonious verse, to describe with beautiful simplicity the grandeur of nature; to indulge in noble and elevated contemplations of man, his government, his happiness; to clothe high philosophy in language which none could

supply who had not the soul of a poet. Observe, thousands fly through countries without reflecting for a moment on what they see, or whom they see, without examining the condition of a people, without studying the landscape of a country. They are more occupied with their hand book, their portmanteau, or their dinner, and cannot afford to waste time upon poetic nonsense. Goldsmith had no portmanteau—is reported to have had a second shirt, and certainly had good legs. The very stones he walked over, the mountains he climbed, the cities he saw, the cottage that gave him shelter, the soil, the climate, the manners and customs of the people amongst whom he dwelt; their sports, their privations, all were presented to his view in a poetic light, and furnished materials for the exercise of his genius. As he walked he moralized; the structure of “The Traveller,” and many of the philosophical thoughts it contains, were devised during what must have been occasionally dispiriting journeys. He informs us in his affectionate and manly dedication to his brother, that a part of this poem was formerly written to that brother from Switzerland. The Traveller was not published for years after the return of the author to England, and therefore was the production no less of meditation long and deep, than of close observation and polished taste—it would be well for the traveller in our day to catch the spirit of Goldsmith, to read attentively his verses, meditating on their moral, before he jumps into the steamer with a return ticket to do Europe in three weeks.

How soon and how easily we discover in his poem the mind of Goldsmith,—

“ Such is the patriot’s boast, where’er we roam,  
His first best country, ever is at home.”

He does not question the advantages of liberty and prosperity, but he moralizes on their attendant ills—

“ Where wealth and freedom reign, contentment fails.”

Let us hope the description of the men of Italy applies no longer—

“In Florid Beauty groves and fields appear,  
Man seems the only growth that dwindles here.”

How poetical and yet how true, the contrast of the Italians with the sons of toil—the sturdy men of Switzerland, here

“No vernal bloom their torpid rocks array  
But winter lingering chills the lap of May.”

The humble joys of the free born Swiss, are described with a charming simplicity and the moral is not merely that of the poet but of the patriot,—

“At night returning every labour sped,  
He sits him down the monarch of a shed,  
Smiles by his cheerful fire and round surveys  
His children’s looks that brighten at the blaze,  
While his loved partner boastful of her hoard  
Displays her cleanly platter on the board,  
And haply too some pilgrim thither led  
With many a tale repays the nightly bed.”

“Thus every good his native wilds impart,  
Imprints the patriot passion on his heart,  
And e’en those ills that round his mansion rise  
Enhance the bliss his scanty fund supplies,  
Dear is that shed, to which his soul conforms  
And dear that hill, that lifts him to the storms,  
And as a child when scaring sounds molest  
Clings close, and closer to the mother’s breast,  
So the loud torrent, and the whirlwinds roar  
But bind him to his native mountains more.”

The critic I have named, Mr. Campbell, declares there is no couplet in English rhyme which more perspicuously expresses the flattering, vain, and happy character of the French, than the following—

“They please, are pleas’d; they give to get esteem,  
Till seeming blest, they grow to what they seem.”

Then, after verses which have a close resemblance to the idea happily expanded afterwards in the *Deserted Village*, we arrive at the close of this philosophical and poetical survey of Europe, and find the moral of the whole—

“Vain, very vain, my weary search to find,  
That bliss which only centres in the mind,  
Why have I strayed from pleasure and repose,  
To seek a good, each government bestows?  
In every government, though terrors reign,  
Though tyrant kings, or tyrant laws restrain,  
How small, of all that human hearts endure  
That part, which laws or kings can cause, or cure.”

I was within the last few days reminded forcibly of the lesson taught by this fine poem. A letter reached my hands from a relative in Italy expatiating on the brightness of the morning sun, on the balmy fragrance of the air, and lamenting that in the midst of cold, fog, rain and frost, I could not participate in such delights of climate. The next letter stated. “I have felt the shock of an earthquake.” Awful phenomenon! the volcano produces the earthquake; ashes darken the sky, sky, and while torrents of lava sweep away civilization and its works the earth rocks, may be rent in twain and swallow up cities. Even the clouds that overhang our verdant Isle, the occasional shower, or the wintry blast, are preferable. When it rains we can open our umbrellas, when it blows put on a great coat, and breasting the little difficulties of our position should feel grateful for the liberty, peace, health and abundance, we enjoy. Thus Goldsmith teaches us to philosophize and be thankful.

Mr. Boswell informs us, that Dr. Johnson marked for him the eight lines at the conclusion of the *Traveller*, which he, the Doctor, had written; Boswell specifies the lines in order to remove the erroneous impression that Johnson was the author

of a great part of this incomparable poem. Its success was complete, the writer, the artist, the divine, all lavished their praises, Miss Reynolds declared she would never call Dr. Goldsmith, an ugly man again. The author received from the bookseller twenty guineas, no less, and no more for his noble poem, and found himself poor, and famous.

To prove how pleasantly Goldsmith could string rhymes together, I will read his pleasing reminiscences of Madame Blaize—

“Good people all, with one accord,  
Lament for Madam Blaize,  
Who never wanted a good word—  
From those who spoke her praise.

The needy seldom pass'd her door,  
And always found her kind;  
She freely lent to all the poor—  
Who left a pledge behind.

She strove the neighbourhood to please,  
With manners wondrous winning,  
And never follow'd wicked ways,—  
Unless when she was sinning.

At church, in silks and satins new,  
With hoop of monstrous size;  
She never slumber'd in her pew,—  
But when she shut her eyes.

Her love was sought, I do aver,  
By twenty beaux and more ;  
The King himself has follow'd her,—  
When she has walked before.

But now her wealth and finery fled,  
Her hangers-on cut short all ;  
The doctors found when she was dead,—  
Her last disorder mortal.

Let us lament, in sorrow sore,  
For Kent-street well may say,  
That had she liv'd a twelvemonth more,—  
She had not died to-day."

There are many minor poems, from the same pen always humorous, genial, shrewd and witty.

"The Logicians Refuted" in imitation of Dean Swift is very entertaining. To draw attention to the publication it was announced as the production of Swift, and has actually been included in the edition of his Works by Sir Walter Scott, whereas it belongs to our gentle author. The imitation of the sarcastic Dean is perfect, and the wit consists in proving that the brute is a more rational and respectable animal than the man,—

"Who ever knew an honest brute,  
At law his neighbour prosecute,  
Bring action for assault and battery,  
Or friend beguile with lies and flattery.  
O'er plains they ramble unconfin'd,  
No politics disturb the mind,  
They eat their meals and take their sport,  
Nor know whose in or out of court."

These lines are sharp and clever, and worthy one who wrote the best English of his time.

In the Vicar of Wakefield is introduced a ballad unequalled in the English language, commonly called "The Hermit," by Goldsmith "Edwin and Angelina,"—

"Turn gentle hermit of the dale,"

has been repeated by the lisping accents of childhood with delight, its beauties grow upon us as we ourselves grow old, and the captious critic is obliged to confess that pathetic sentiment, woman's tenderness and love, were never pourtrayed in poetry more sweet, gentle, and touching. The history of this popular ballad is given by Mr. Prior. It

appears it was originally printed for the private recreation of the Countess of Northumberland in *octo decimo* form, but was not made public till after the Vicar of Wakefield appeared. Subsequently to this incident Goldsmith was summoned to attend at Northumberland house, and the narrative of that visit is instructive; it is given by Sir John Hawkins, a member at one time of the Club. "Having one day," says Sir John, "a call to make on the late Duke then Earl of Northumberland, I found Goldsmith waiting for an audience in an outer room; I asked him what had brought him there, he told me an invitation from his Lordship, I made my business as short as I could, and as a reason mentioned that Goldsmith was waiting without. The Earl asked me whether I was acquainted with him, I told him I was, adding what I thought likely to recommend him: I retired and staid in the outer room to take him home; upon his coming out I asked him the result of his conversation—"His Lordship," says he, "told me he had read my poem (meaning the Traveller) and was much delighted with it; that he was going Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, and that hearing I was a native of that country he should be glad to do me any kindness, 'and what did you answer,' said I, 'to this gracious offer;' 'why,' said he, 'I could say nothing but that I had a brother there a clergyman, who stood in need of help, as for myself I have no dependence upon the promises of great men, I look to the booksellers for support, they are my best friends, and I am not inclined to forsake them for others.' Thus did this idiot in the affairs of the world trifl with his fortunes, and put back the hand that was held out to assist him." This anecdote proves the independence of Goldsmith's character, and the strength of his affection for his brother. It appeared to be 'idiotcy' to a worldly man to behave thus, but it raises the individual in the estimation of all who can respect generosity of nature. Goldsmith did not

seek and never gained the patronage of the great, the Earl of Northumberland sought the man of genius and offered to befriend him—Goldsmith told him how he might gratify his feelings by promoting a pure minister of the Gospel, Goldsmith got nothing, his brother got nothing; but many a pension was at that time granted to the undeserving, and many a promotion bestowed on the time serving, on the factious, or the corrupt.

It is plain that if Goldsmith had condescended to follow the hired political writers of his time, he might have been enriched, or if he had flattered the great, he might have been pensioned or rewarded; he did neither of these things, he preserved his political opinions which were those of a high monarchy man, unchanged, he dedicated the poem which raised him to fame to that brother who lived and died on forty pounds a year, and he dedicated his successful play to Dr. Johnson, the friend of his literary life. In proof that I have not exaggerated his political and personal integrity, I quote from Prior the following anecdote—“A few months, writes Mr. Montagu, before the death of Dr. Scott, author of *Anti Sejanus* and other poetical tracts in support of Lord North’s administration, I happened to dine with him in company, with my friend Sir George Tuthill, who was the Doctor’s physician. After dinner Dr. Scott mentioned as matter of astonishment, and a proof of the folly of men, who are according to common opinion ignorant of the world, that he was once sent with a *carte blanche* from the ministry to Oliver Goldsmith, to induce him to write in favour of the administration. ‘I found him’ said the Doctor, ‘in a miserable set of chambers in the Temple, I told him my authority, I told him I was empowered to pay most liberally for his exertions; and would you believe it, he was so absurd as to say—“I can earn as much as will supply my wants without writing for any party: the assistance therefore you offer is unnecessary to me,” and so I left him, ‘added Dr. Scott,’ in his garret.’”

The plays written by Dr. Goldsmith are chiefly remarkable for humour, rather broad—always racy and animating. It was thought by sentimental shallow critics, that Tony Lumpkin would have ruined the play, but it ensured the success of "She Stoops to Conquer," and convulsed the audience with laughter. Who could behold and hear a good Tony Lumpkin, and not enjoy his fun; the humour was natural, and so, like the Poetry and Essays, moved the hearts of the people. "The Good-natured Man," is less racy of the soil than Tony Lumpkin; its success was for a time doubtful on the stage, finally it withstood the censure of critics. I think it very likely the amusing scene in which the bailiffs are dressed up and figure as gentlemen till their vulgar nature breaks forth, was the representation of what Goldsmith had witnessed in his strange adventures.

Goldsmith had now reaped a harvest of fame. The King had commanded his plays; the booksellers had replenished his purse; his ideas expanded, and his expenses increased. He changed his abode, descended into other and more costly chambers in the Temple, and settled over Blackstone then composing his Commentaries; and who had not unfrequently to complain of the musical parties, and boisterous mirth of the Poet. Very probably, while Blackstone was deep in the mysteries of the feudal system, his investigations were interrupted by the merry companions of Goldy, singing lustily, 'The Three Jolly Pigeons'. Judge Day, Henry Grattan, Mr. Cooke, Mr. Bolt, lawyers all, and accomplished men, enjoyed the hospitality, and have admired the generosity and genial nature of the author of 'She Stoops to Conquer.' Mr. Bolt was the useful neighbour, when bailiffs threatened or debts became pressing. Goldsmith soon exhausted the profits of his Plays in the purchase of fine furniture, rich carpets, and grand clothes; gave costly entertainments, paid

a high rent for his new abode, never balanced expenditure against income, incurred fresh debt, and rushed into fresh difficulties.

Meanwhile he hears of his brother's death; the good man died on "forty pounds a year." His death deeply affected Goldsmith. He determined to publish *The Deserted Village*, certain verses in which poem bear the marks of being inspired by recent grief for departed worth.

No doubt the subject of this beautiful poem had been long his contemplation and study, no doubt the design had been carefully chosen, the parts skilfully laid out, the scenes well considered, the language weighed with care, and polished with assiduity. No pains or labour that the most fastidious taste could employ were spared to improve the composition; and no great intellectual work was ever effected without great labour. The success of *The Deserted Village*, was almost unparalleled. It flew through several editions, and has retained its popularity in the public mind down to the present hour. Why? Because the Poet was describing what he had seen, what he deeply felt, what was domestic, peaceful, sweet, sympathizing, and delightful. The village public-house, the busy mill, the schoolmaster, the innocent joys of country life,—were they ever so touchingly described before? If Eloquence consists in the subject, so must Poetry, and the success of *The Deserted Village*, only affords another proof, that simplicity and sublimity are akin. The feeling, the pathos, the tenderness, which have thrown a bewitching charm over the Poem prove, that subjects apparently common may be elevated and dignified by the master touch of genius. The harmonious versification is confessed by all; the verses read aloud fall on the ear with the cadence of music.

Byron was enthusiastic in his praises of every line. The soul of Goldsmith must have been melted with sensibility

when he composed some of his immortal stanzas. But the moral is objected to as unsound, the theory is discovered to be an absurdity or a falsehood; *i. e.*, no Auburn in England was ever so deserted, no happy villagers ever so expelled.

This in truth is an objection to poetry altogether, because the poet may imagine and construct his theory, which of course should not be opposed to reason or to nature; but if his idea be correct, then he is not open to criticism because he adheres to that idea throughout. Accordingly, Goldsmith paints the joys, the innocence, the happiness of rural life, the wretchedness of The Deserted Village, the miseries of the expelled villagers with perfect propriety. He is true to himself, and to the poetic conception, from first to last. He prefers agriculture and its innocence, to commerce and its luxuries: the glories of art fade in his eyes before nature and virtue. In the mad pursuit of money he insists in verses which will live for ever, that piety and poetry may be alike forgotten or extinguished. He argues in poetry that the wealth must not be confounded with the happiness of a nation. Goldsmith ever maintained that he had in his experience met examples of what he so deeply felt, and so pathetically described. Were there no improvements made at the expense of population, no ruined hearths in England and Scotland, as in Ireland? A writer on the "Poor Laws" has been referred to by a modern critic in justification of Goldsmith's theory. Mr. Potter is the writer who relates this anecdote—when the Earl of Leicester was complimented upon the completion of his great design at Holkham; he replied, "It is a melancholy thing to stand alone in one's country. I look round, not a house is to be seen but mine, I am the giant of a giant castle, and have eat up all my neighbours."

This only shows how fact may be found to sustain theory;

but the question is, not whether Goldsmith's views on Political Economy of which he was not a Professor, were accurate, but whether his poetical conception was in itself natural and beautiful, and whether it was sustained consistently throughout. I have been induced to enter into an investigation of the structure of this affecting Poem, in consequence of the severe condemnation pronounced upon it by Lord Macaulay. The noble critic says—

“ In mere diction and versification this celebrated poem is fully equal, perhaps superior, to the ‘ Traveller,’ and it is generally preferred by that large class of readers, who think with Bayes in the ‘ Rehearsal,’ that the only use of a plan is, to bring in fine things. More discerning judges, however, while they admire the beauty of the details, are shocked by one unpardonable fault, which pervades the whole. The fault we mean is not that theory about wealth and luxury, which has so often been censured by political economists. The theory is indeed false, but the poem, considered merely as a poem, is not necessarily the worse on that account. A poet may easily be pardoned for reasoning ill, but he cannot be pardoned for describing ill—for observing the world in which he lives so carelessly, that his portraits bear no resemblance to the originals—for exhibiting, as copies from real life, monstrous combinations of things which never were, and never could be, found together. What would be thought of a painter who should mix August and January in one landscape, who should introduce a frozen river into a harvest scene? Would it be a sufficient defence of such a picture to say, that every part was exquisitely colored—that the green hedges, the apple trees loaded with fruit, the waggons reeling under the yellow sheaves, and the sunburnt reapers wiping their foreheads were very fine, and that the ice and the boys sliding were also very fine? To such a picture the ‘ Deserter’

'Village' bears a great resemblance. It is made up of incongruous parts. The village in its happy days is a true English village. The village in its decay is an Irish village. The felicity and the misery, which Goldsmith has brought close together, belong to two different countries, and to two different stages in the progress of society. He had assuredly never seen in his native island such a rural paradise, such a seat of plenty, content, and tranquillity as his "Auburn." He had assuredly never seen in England all the inhabitants of such a paradise turned out of their homes in one day, and forced to emigrate in a body to America. The hamlet, he had probably seen in Kent—the ejectment, he had probably seen in Munster: but, by joining the two, 'he has produced something which never was, and never will be seen, in any part of the world.'

I believe that criticism to be erroneous. First, who are the discerning judges, who are shocked by the unpardonable fault which pervades the Poem? When did they shine? What "monstrous combinations of things has Goldsmith described, which never were or could be, found together?" What is it he has produced, which never was, and never will be seen, in any part of the world? Nothing so unsound in criticism have I ever read. Must the poet fix time, and place, and locality for his poem? Is he merely confined to one spot for the execution of his plan? Is not the whole kingdom open to him? Where does the poet say, I am about to jumble English prosperity with Irish misery? One single idea is presented by the poet, which is wrought out in the poem to perfection. Was Goldsmith investigating trade returns, tables of statistics, or of population? Was he arguing for or against emigration? Was he bound to contend in favor of commercial wealth, or against rustic felicity? Why,

the very poetry of the idea consists in his arguing against what the plethoric Saxon would naturally most admire! A Poet, to be a Poet, must not necessarily enrol himself amongst the disciples of Adam Smith. I rejoice to find in Campbell's judgment, long prior to Macaulay's criticism, a vindication of Goldsmith's theory. "His theory is adverse to trade, and wealth, and arts, he delineates their evils, and disdains their vaunted benefits. This is certainly, not philosophical neutrality; but a natural balancing of arguments would have frozen the spirit of poetry. We must consider him as a pleader on that side of the question, which accorded with the predominant state of his heart; and, considered in that light, he is the poetical advocate of many truths. He revisits a spot consecrated by his earliest and tenderest recollections; he misses the bloomy flush of life which had marked its once busy, but now depopulated, scenes; he beholds the inroads of monopolizing wealth, which had driven the peasant to emigration; and tracing the sources of the evil to 'trade's proud empire,' which has so often proved a transient glory and an enervating good; he laments the state of society, 'where wealth accumulates and men decay.' Undoubtedly, counter-views of the subject might have presented themselves, both to the poet and philosopher, but those distant and cold calculations of opinion would have been wholly foreign to the tone and subject of the poem. It was meant to fix our patriotic sympathy on an innocent and suffering class of the community, to refresh our recollection of the simple joys, the sacred and strong local attachments, and all the manly virtues of rustic life. Of such virtues the very remembrance is by degrees obliterated in the breasts of commercial people. It was meant to rebuke the luxuries and selfish spirit of opulence, which, imitating the pomp and solitude of feudal abodes without

their hospitality and protection, surrounded itself with monotonous pleasure-grounds, which indignantly 'spurned the cottage from the green.'

"Although Goldsmith has not examined all the points and bearings of the question, suggested by the changes in society which were passing before his mind, he has strongly and affectedly pointed out the immediate evils, with which those changes were pregnant. Nor, while the picture of Auburn delights the fancy, does it make a useless appeal to our moral sentiments. It may be well sometimes that society, in the very pride and triumph of its improvement, should be taught to pause, and look back upon its former steps—to count the virtues that have been lost, or the victims that have been sacrificed by its changes. Whatever may be the calculations of the political economists, as to ultimate effects, the circumstances of agricultural wealth being thrown into large masses, and of the small farmer exiled from his scanty domain, foreboded a baneful influence on the independent character of the peasantry, which it is, by no means clear, that subsequent events have proved to be either slight or imaginary."

Thus a greater poet than Macaulay and, I think, a better critic, has justified the theory of Goldsmith; and I doubt not Mr. Froude, the historian of the Tudors would vindicate his doctrine, though not sustainable by the modern theories of Political Economy.

But how would Lord Macaulay answer the argument founded on the popularity of the *Deserted Village* as to the idea, consistency, structure, and harmony of the Poem. Either the critic or the author must be right. Who is to decide? I answer, the people for whom the poet wrote—to whose hearts he appealed—to whose hearts he appeals still. The people of the countries that are civilized have pronounced their verdict in favour of our gifted countryman. But Lord

Macaulay is himself a Poet, and I will compare his claims to immortality with those of the writer he so sharply criticises. It would not be just to refer to the feeble effusions which have been printed as Poems in his *Miscellaneous Works*, I will take his stirring “*Lays of Ancient Rome*”—the best of his lordship’s poems and unquestionably popular and good. Horatius Cocles and his two heroic friends have stayed Porsena’s host, and kept the narrow bridge against the foe.—The bridge has meanwhile been taken down behind the Roman heroes—

“ Back darted Spurius Lartius ;  
Herminius darted back.”

Horatius Cocles stands alone before the hostile legions—

“ Alone stood brave Horatius,  
But constant still in mind ;  
Thrice thirty thousand foes before,  
And the broad flood behind—  
“ Down with him ! ” cried false Sextus,  
With a smile on his pale face—  
“ Now yield thee , ” cried Lars Porsena,  
“ Now yield thee to our grace.”

Round turned he, as not deigning  
Those craven ranks to see ;  
Nought spake he to Lars Porsena  
To Sextus nought spake he ;  
But he saw on Palatinus  
The white porch of his home ;  
And he spake to the noble river  
That rolls by the towers of Rome.

“ Oh Tiber ! father Tiber !  
To whom the Romans pray,  
A Roman’s life, a Roman’s arms,  
Take thou in charge this day ! ”  
So he spake, and speaking, sheathed  
The good sword by his side,  
And, with his harness on his back,  
Plunged headlong in the tide.

No sound of joy or sorrow  
 Was heard from either bank ;  
 But friends and foes in dumb surprise  
 With parted lips and straining eyes,  
 Stood gazing where he sank ;  
 And when above the surges  
 They saw his crest appear,  
 All Rome sent forth a rapturous cry,  
 And even the ranks of Tuscany  
 Could scarce forbear to cheer.

But fiercely ran the current,  
 Swollen high by months of rain :  
 And fast his blood was flowing ;  
 And he was sore in pain,  
 And heavy with his armour  
 And spent with changing blows :  
 And oft they thought him sinking,  
 But still again he rose.

Never, I ween, did swimmer,  
 In such an evil case,  
 Struggle through such a raging flood  
 Safe to the landing place :  
 But his limbs were borne up bravely  
 By the brave heart within,  
 And our good father Tiber  
 Bare bravely up his chin.

“ Curse on him !” quoth false Sextus ;  
 “ Will not the villain drown ?  
 But for this stay, ere close of day  
 We should have sacked the town !”  
 “ Heaven help him !” quoth Lars Porsena,  
 “ And bring him safe to shore ;  
 For such a gallant feat of arms  
 Was never seen before.”

And now he feels the bottom ;  
 Now on dry earth he stands ;  
 Now round him throng the Fathers  
 To press his gory hands ;  
 And now with shouts and clapping,  
 And noise of weeping loud,  
 He enters through the River-gate,  
 Borne by the joyous crowd.

They gave him of the corn-land,  
 That was of public right  
 As much as two strong oxen  
 Could plough from morn till night ;  
 And they made a molten image,  
 And set it up on high,  
 And there it stands unto this day  
 To witness if I lie.

It stands in the Comitium,  
 Plain for all folk to see ;  
 Horatius in his harness,  
 Halting upon one knee ;  
 And underneath is written,  
 In letters all of gold,  
 How valiantly he kept the bridge  
 In the brave days of old.

And still his name sounds stirring  
 Unto the men of Rome,  
 As the trumpet-blast that cries to them  
 To charge the Volscian home ;  
 And wives still pray to Juno  
 For boys with hearts as bold  
 As his who kept the bridge so well  
 In the brave days of old."

Now, from the carnage of the battle-field, the bloody  
 triumph of the Roman hero, and the shouts of the Roman

people, I draw your attention to a peaceful village and a holier theme.

“ Near yonder copse, where once the garden smiled,  
And still where many a garden flower grows wild,  
There, where a few torn shrubs the place disclose,  
The village Preacher’s modest mansion rose.  
A man he was to all the country dear,  
And passing rich with forty pounds a year ;  
Remote from towns he ran his godly race,  
Nor e’er had changed, nor wished to change his place ;  
Unpractic’d he to fawn, or seek for power,  
By doctrines fashioned to the varying hour ;  
Far other aims his heart had learned to prize,  
More skill’d to raise the wretched, than to rise.  
His house was known to all the vagrant train ;  
He chid their wanderings, but relieved their pain.  
The long-remembered beggar was his guest,  
Whose beard descending swept his aged breast ;  
The ruined spendthrift, now no longer proud,  
Claimed kindred there, and had his claims allowed ;  
The broken soldier, kindly bade to stay,  
Sat by his fire, and talked the night away,  
Wept o’er his wounds, or, tales of sorrow done,  
Shouldered his crutch, and shewed how fields were won !  
Pleased with his guests, the good man learned to glow,  
And quite forgot their vices in their woe ;  
Careless their merits or their faults to scan,  
His pity gave, ere charity began.

Thus to relieve the wretched was his pride,  
And e’en his failings leaned to Virtue’s side ;  
But, in his duty prompt at every call,  
He watched and wept, he prayed and felt for all :  
And, as a bird each fond endearment tries  
To tempt her new-fledged offspring to the skies,  
He tried each art, reproved each dull delay,  
Allured to brighter worlds, and led the way.

Beside the bed where parting lift was laid,  
And sorrow, guilt, and pain, by turns dismayed,

The reverend champion stood. At his control,  
Despair and anguish fled the struggling soul;  
Comfort came down the trembling wretch to raise,  
And his last faltering accents whispered praise.

At church, with meek and unaffected grace,  
His looks adorned the venerable place;  
Truth from his lips prevailed with double sway;  
And fools who came to scoff, remained to pray.  
The service past, around the pious man,  
With steady zeal, each honest rustic ran;  
Even children followed with endearing wile,  
And plucked his gown, to share the good man's smile:  
His ready smile a parent's warmth expressed,  
Their welfare pleased him, and their cares distressed;  
To them his heart, his loves, his griefs were given,  
But all his serious thoughts had rest in heaven:  
As some tall cliff, that lifts its awful form,  
Swells from the vale, and midway leaves the storm;  
Though round its breast the rolling clouds are spread,  
Eternal sunshine settles on its head.

The portrait drawn is of the pious minister of Christ. Why is it so striking? Because it is drawn in the majesty of truth. We have a sweetness, a benevolence, a pious generosity, an exalted purity and disinterestedness, a divine simplicity pourtrayed in the first part of the character. From the relief of wretchedness, we rise to the contemplation of his performance of sacred duty. We are taught to believe that in heaven there is joy over one sinner that repenteth that to bring down comfort from above which may change and save a human soul, is a heavenly office. "The reverend champion," beside the bed of guilt and death,

"At whose control,  
Despair and anguish fled the struggling soul,"

throws Horatius Cocles into insignificance. The victory over

sin and death eclipses the puny battle on the bridge, while the "tall cliff," towering into sunshine above the clouds and storms, grandly exemplifies the serene triumph of Christianity over the sins, follies, passions and crimes of man. Goldsmith will outlive the criticism, and, perhaps, the critic.

Our discourse draws to an end, not without a moral. Imprudence was the failing of Goldsmith; he could neither economize time nor money. No certain income belonged to him. Johnson had a pension; Burke had a pension; Beattie had a pension; Hume had a pension; Robertson contrived to get £4500 for "The History of Charles V.;" while Goldsmith had no pension; received £20 for *The Traveller*, £60 for *The Vicar of Wakefield*, and thought himself overpaid with £100 for *The Deserted Village*. True, his weighty undertakings, such as the *Histories* and *The Animated Nature*, were more amply remunerated; but the drudgery of these labours oppressed his spirit and engrossed his time; he became disheartened and unhappy. In alleviation of his trials and troubles, he sought in a society not always suited to his position and character, to drown reflection.

The misfortunes of authors, in other days, have been proverbial; and what a censure does not the fact pronounce upon the ingratitude of society! The other professions enrich—authorship impoverishes.

"The rich physician, honored lawyers, ride,  
While the poor scholar foots it by their side."

Poverty has been the muse's patrimony; and as that poetical divinity teacheth us, when Jupiter's daughters were each of them married to the gods, the Muses alone were left solitary. Helicon forsaken of all suitors, the humorist, old Burton, adds, "I believe it was because they had no portion."

“ Why did Calliope live so long a maid ?  
Because she had no portion to be paid.”

So the followers of the Muses may have, like Goldsmith, gained fame and an early grave. Oliver Goldsmith, in his forty-sixth year died—a broken-hearted man ! A volume has been written by the elder D’Israeli, on the “ Calamities of Authors.” Goldsmith has reminded us of the poets who lived and died in circumstances of wretchedness. A dismal record might be drawn up of those who wrote well and lived ill. Authors have sacrificed happiness, reason, life, in their ennobling pursuits, they have not been understood by those around them—the bent of their genius has not been found out in time; friendly help has been wanting in the sad hour of need, or has only been exerted to inscribe the epitaph or elevate the tomb. Otway died devouring a roll of bread, in an agony of hunger. The life of Savage, a man of unquestionable genius, makes us shudder. Johnson was stirred to the depths of his soul when he penned the biography of his early friend. Chatterton, having eaten nothing for three days, swallowed arsenic, and was buried in a shell in the ground of Shoe-lane workhouse. In the Manchester Exhibition of Art, my attention was arrested by a picture, the design of which I did not at first comprehend. In a narrow chamber there lay stretched on a pallet, a youth o’er whose gentle countenance the paleness of death was spread, the dim light of dawn stole in through an open casement, the manuscript poem lay near; the phial of poison was clutched in the hand—it had done its work. The artist, himself a young man of genius, thus told the history of Chatterton. I deny not he was, at the age of eighteen, a sceptic, proud and reserved; but his fate was sad and awful. Can we guess the maddened feelings with which a man of genius, whose early hope has been blasted, takes refuge from

misery in suicide? Twice in his life the thought so horrible occurred to Goldsmith; but he was restrained by his belief in Christianity, and lived to immortalise his name.

But we must look to the other side of the picture. Sad as the life of Goldsmith was; painful as is the history of the calamities of authors, yet in all their struggles and sufferings, they have their hours of intensest joy. D'Israeli imagines this time of happiness to come when the solitary author is in his study. "The solitary man of genius is arranging the materials of instruction and curiosity from every age. He is striking out, in the concussion of new light, a new order of ideas for his own times. View him in the stillness of meditation, his eager spirit busied over a copious page, and his eye sparkling with gladness. He has concluded what his countrymen will hereafter cherish as the legacy of genius."

These are just reflections. We can comprehend what men of sensitive feelings suffer—can we even imagine the degree of their happiness? Can we even guess the joys of Milton, as, blind in the body, he saw with the eye of the mind heavenly visions, and sung enraptured his seraphic song? Can we guess the felicity of men of genius in a garret, exercising their faculties for the good of their fellow-creatures, or for the glory of God? So sure as the pleasures of the intellect exceed the pleasures of the senses, do their enjoyments exceed those of the busy herd of vulgar men who deride their foibles, and despise their labours. Can we compass the feelings of Oliver Goldsmith, as he laid down his pen, having finished his character of the Vicar of Wakefield? Can you guess his sober delight as he reviewed his sketch in *The Deserted Village*, of the true minister of Christ here below? In fact, he had done a good work—taught mankind a great lesson—set up the village preacher to be a pillar of light in our land for ever—redeemed hours misspent, energy wasted, by

recording in the language of poetry and of truth how bright and beautiful is the character of the Christian pastor in its perfection; how Christianity can enable the believer to endure to the end, and triumph. For us, for the Christian world, Goldsmith did this blessed work.

I might here stop, and refuse to draw "his frailties from their dread abode," but I dare not. The biographers of Oliver Goldsmith have written kindly of his genius as they ought. Mr. Prior and Mr. W. Irving have written kindly of the country of his birth.\* Mr. Forster, a faithful chronicler, excuses Goldsmith's indiscretions, as well "by the nature to which he was born, as the land in which he was raised!" He requires the reader "not to separate his mirth and heedlessness from the Irish soil in which they grew, in which impulse still reigns predominant over conscience and reflection, where unthinking benevolence yet passes for considerate goodness, and the gravest duties of life are overborne by social pleasure, or sunk in mad excitement." Against the justice, against the fairness of that sweeping censure on our country, I protest—not the less strongly because the writer was an old companion and friend. That sentence was not penned in the genial spirit which belongs to a man of letters. But weigh it well—remember the character erroneously ascribed to your country in a work of high authority; and prove by your conduct that you are as thoughtful and industrious as the writer would wish you to be, but does not believe that as a nation, you are.

\* Mr. Forster's Goldsmith is not only the most complete but the most delightful biographical work of modern times—I subscribe cordially to Macaulay's opinion "that the highest place must be assigned to the eminently interesting work of Mr. Forster," at the same time regretting that the noble critic failed to catch its spirit.

Macaulay contemptuously proclaims Oliver Goldsmith to have been "vain, sensual, frivolous, profuse, improvident." Having charged that he was extravagant in dress, in feasting, in promiscuous charities and worse, he adds with increasing bitterness that it was not in these extravagancies his chief expense lay—"he had been from boyhood a gambler, and at once the most sanguine and the most unskilful of gamblers." He further computes that Goldsmith's income latterly amounted to the vast proportions of £400 per annum. The charge of gambling Mr. Forster, the best authority on the subject, declares to be founded upon a trifling indiscretion, and I do not believe it to have been justly imputed to the associate and the friend of Johnson, of Reynolds, and of Burke. The charge of possessing at the close of a literary life of agonizing toil £400 per annum, comes well from a literary man who held an office in India worth £10,000 a year; and I may add that it is probable, Lord Macaulay received for every line he wrote one hundred times a greater reward than fell to the lot of the unfortunate Goldsmith. But you must understand, that poverty in England, has been viewed almost as a crime. Being selfreliant, resolute, persevering, and successful in their industry the English despise the poverty which they think springs from idleness and improvidence, and they accordingly despised in Goldsmith, and despise in his country, the poverty they imagine to exist through the incorrigible propensities of the Irish people. Until, therefore, through your own laborious exertions, you want nothing from them, and ask for nothing save the sweet rewards of industry, you will not be respected as a nation. I speak as your friend, and because I feel keenly the injustice of an indiscriminate imputation upon a people whom I desire to see honoured and respected. Labour therefore, to be not rich, but indepen-

dent, cultivate industry, and the manly virtues. Shun vice and its miseries, and as you improve your own condition, you will improve the condition of your country. I do not counsel a grovelling pursuit of money, I do not insinuate that the rich are necessarily happy.

“ He is not happy that is rich,  
And hath the world at will,  
But he that wisely can God's gifts  
Possess, and use them still.”

Avoid the imprudence, the fatal effects of which you are taught by the life and death of Oliver Goldsmith. Remember the solemn words with which Dr. Johnson concludes his biography of Savage,—“ Those who in confidence of superior capacities, or attainments, disregard the common maxims of life, must be reminded that nothing will supply the want of prudence, that negligence and irregularity long continued, will make knowledge useless, wit ridiculous, and genius contemptible.”

The countrymen of Goldsmith, proud of his genius, are now about to raise a monument to his memory, and it is right so to do. To his everlasting honour be it spoken, the Earl of Carlisle has been forward in the work of love. But I would remind you of what Lord Bacon has so thoughtfully and so truly said, “ It is not possible to have the true pictures or statues of Cyrus, Alexander, Cæsar, no, nor of the kings or great personages of much later years—for the originals cannot last, and the copies cannot but lose of the life and truth. But the images of men's wits and knowledge remain in books, exempted from the wrong of time, and capable of perpetual renovation. Neither are they fitly to be called images, because they generate still, and cast their seeds in the minds of

others, provoking and causing infinite action and opinions in succeeding ages."

The durable monument of Goldsmith will be in his books—the inscription will not be effaced by time—the imagery will not moulder away.



THE RIGHT HON. J. WHITESIDE, Q.C., D.C.L.

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Elliot

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**THE RIGHT HON. J. WHITESIDE, Q.C.**

The name of this gentleman will always be associated with the celebrated Yelverton case. As counsel for Mrs. Yelverton he was most energetic, and thoroughly had that lady's interest at heart. It was through his great zeal and talent that a verdict was first obtained in favour of Mrs. Yelverton, at Dublin. How this verdict was appealed against, and with what results, the public is fully aware.

The Right Hon. James Whiteside is the son of a beneficed clergyman of the Church of England, and was born in the county of Wicklow in 1806. He was educated at Trinity College, Dublin, where he graduated in honours, and he subsequently obtained premiums in the first class that was formed in the University of London.

He was called to the Irish bar in 1830, and soon obtained an extensive practice, and was engaged on a great many important cases.

In 1861 he was first returned to parliament for the pocket borough of Enniskillen, and was appointed Solicitor-General for Ireland under Lord Derby's Administration. In 1858, on Lord Derby again coming into power, Mr. Whiteside received the appointment of her Majesty's Attorney-General for Ireland, and was also sworn in as a Privy Counsellor for that country during the same Administration. He now represents the Dublin University.

Not alone in the profession of the law, or by his parliamentary career, is Mr. Whiteside indebted for his fame. He is well known in the republic of letters as an author of several works of merit on Italy and ancient Rome.

As a politician, Mr. Whiteside is generally consistent, and always useful to his party. He has also been regular in his attendance on his parliamentary duties; and on important occasions, when

there was a proba-

bility of a "scandal," it must have been something very extraordinary indeed to keep Mr. Whiteside from his place in the House. Like most of his countrymen, he is fond of a row, and no man can get up one better on the most unlikely occasions. Those who have heard him, will scarcely forget his eloquence. It is true Irish eloquence—an eloquence that may be seen and "felt," as Lord Palmerston once said, as well as heard. Mr. Whiteside's flow of language is indeed most remarkable. Mr. Disraeli deems him one of the best orators in the House of Commons. Yet, withal, it is Irish eloquence, and not true oratory, and never produces a permanent effect.

Apart from his well-known inflammability in the House, in private intercourse there are few more amiable men than the Right Honourable James Whiteside.

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